

The background image shows a close-up of a hand holding a fork, poised over a white plate. On the plate is a dish of pomegranate seeds and purple flowers. A teal rectangular text box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and author information. The entire composition is framed by a dotted teal border.

IS FOOD A (CROSS-CULTURAL / INTERPERSONAL) COMMUNICATION MEDIUM?

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Master's Programme in Visual Communication
Design | Department of Media | Aalto University,
the School of Arts, Design and Architecture |
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Abstract

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The central question of this Master thesis is whether food is a (cross-cultural or interpersonal) communication medium or not. And if it is, how does it work and how does it relate to visual communication? This question is looked at through a multidisciplinary theoretical lense and accompanied by case studies.

The newly emerged discipline of food design is the correct field to carry out such research. But what is food design? Is it even a true design discipline? This thesis argues that food design is a design discipline, although its territory within design has not been clearly defined yet. This thesis is an attempt to decode food design.

It is believed that food is a form of nonverbal communication, which is used in a very similar manner to a language. The literature review includes a comprehensive study of different communication models and theories and considers food's communicational aspects from both macro and micro levels.

Food is also very visual. Therefore, from a visual communication point of view, it deserves to be studied properly. However, food goes beyond just sight. It stimulates all the five senses. Reviewing the comprehensive research on the multi-sensory dimensions of food carried out by neuro-gastronomists, reveals more about the communicational potential of food.

Food is, naturally, the territory of chefs. That is why another part of this thesis is dedicated to the developments of the world of gastronomy, in an attempt to find out important clues, which link gastronomy to design.

In the recent decades the chefs, designers and communication scientists have met each other in order to elevate food to a totally new level. Through studying the elements of this paradigm shift this thesis is finalised with two case studies, which examine food as a communication medium in practice.

Through this multidisciplinary theoretical study and the case studies this Master thesis provides a framework for food design as a discipline and shows that food is, indeed, a communication medium, which can connect people on a visceral level, beyond cultural and linguistic barriers.



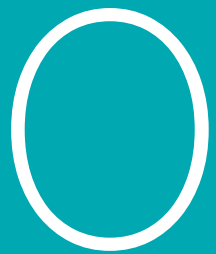
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1

INTRO

Introduction

This Master thesis started from an identity crisis of a designer, “lost in translation” in Finland. In search of a “language”, which could be efficiently used as a tool to tell his story, food came along. It turned out that food is, in fact, a powerful communication medium. And so, a personal challenge transformed to an academic interest in order to discover further the communicational aspects of food, from the perspective of visual communication.

The central question of this Master thesis is whether food is a (cross-cultural or interpersonal) communication medium or not. And if it is, how does it work and how does it relate to visual communication? This question is looked at through a multidisciplinary theoretical lense and accompanied by case studies.

The newly emerged discipline of food design is the correct field to carry out such research. But what is food design or is it even a true design discipline? This thesis argues that food design is a design discipline, although its territory within

design has not been defined yet. This thesis is an attempt to decode food design.

Food has been a subject of study in a variety of human science disciplines for decades. Many of the scholars and researchers of those disciplines have emphasized the communicational aspect of food and encouraged researchers from communication backgrounds to carry out further studies on food from that perspective. It is believed that food is a form of nonverbal communication, which is used in a similar manner to a language. It is also claimed that food is communication. Consequently, researchers with communication background conduct comprehensive research on food. The literature review carried out for this thesis includes a comprehensive study of these models and theories and considers food’s communicational aspects from both macro and micro levels.

Food is also visual. Therefore, from a visual communication point of view, it deserves to be studied properly. However, food goes beyond just sight. It

stimulates all the five senses. Reviewing the comprehensive research on the multi-sensory dimensions of food carried out by neuro-gastronomists, reveals more about the communicational potential of food.

For long food has also clearly been territory of chefs. That is why another part of this thesis is dedicated to the developments of the world of gastronomy, in an attempt to find out important clues, which link gastronomy to design.

After having been separated in their own fields for long, in the recent decades the chefs, designers and communication

scientists have met each other and elevated food to a totally new level. Through studying the elements of this paradigm shift this thesis is finalised with two case studies, which examine food as a communication medium in practice.

Through this multidisciplinary theoretical study and the case studies this Master thesis provides a framework for food design as a discipline and shows that food is, indeed, a communication medium, which can connect people on a visceral level, beyond cultural and linguistic barriers.

2

WHY?

Why?

This chapter describes the reasons behind the thesis. It gives an answer to the question of why in the era of social media and the internet someone should study the communicational aspects of food? It explains how a personal dilemma turns into a professional challenge of discovering food beyond its nutritional value.

Identity Crisis as a Motivation

It all started on the 20th of August 2011 when the plane landed at Helsinki airport. I was extremely excited and nervous. I had been fighting for a few years to see this very moment. I quit my job as a mining engineer in Iran and decided to make my lifelong dream happen to become an [industrial] designer. Creativity and innovation; creating something out of nothing is my passion. That is why I was fixated on becoming a designer. In the Iranian context these kinds of decisions are considered crazy. Who cares about passion or dream; you should just follow your destiny dictated by 'kismet'. That was why I made up my mind to make the dream happen somewhere outside of Iran. The journey took me first to Turkey. I don't forget when Savaş Çekiç (the lecturer in Marmara University in Istanbul) asked me "why Turkey?" and I replied: "because I want to study abroad". He wondered whether Turkey is abroad! After two years I realized that he was right and Turkey was not abroad enough.

I applied for a Master Program at TaiK which was a very well-known

design school but surprisingly I got the acceptance letter from Aalto University. Anyway I packed my bags and flew to the land of Kismet (considering that I was running away from my own kismet). Soon Fazer's Kismet became my favourite chocolate but abroad was not as rosy as I imagined.

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with historical and urban settlements dating

back to 7000 BC. Geopolitical location of Iran shaped its culture. The country has been in the middle of the old world, connecting four corners of the world to each other. We Iranians are extremely proud of our nationality and cultural heritage. During the last four decades, the political and economic sanctions of Iran by the western states on the one hand, and denationalising the nation by the theocratic Iranian regime on the other, boosted the national pride to some delusional levels.

Despite all the glorious background, nowadays being an Iranian is an undeniable stigma. International and national political propagandas created a totally distorted image of Iran and the Iranians. They call it the Axis of Evil. The 80 million people of the country are continuously labelled as terrorists. Soon "where are you from?" became the most painful question that I was asked frequently in Finland. In the 4th decade of my life, my identity was under question.

"Who am I and where am I from?" joined the current question of "What am I doing in my professional life?"

I had been a very sociable, approachable and pleasant-to-be-with person in the previous life but then with smashed self-esteem, broken English language, zero Finnish language and a huge cultural shock, I felt very lonely and miserable. Surprisingly many people thought that I was an Italian (still the confusion continues). For a while I enjoyed the illusion and I thought about learning the Italian language to become who I look like instead of who I am. But at one miraculous time -I don't remember when- I decided to not only accept who I am but tell others why, despite all the odds, I am proud of myself and my nationality.

The question was how to express my identity proudly without the fear of being judged or further misunderstood. Which media would be the most effective one and would reach to a bigger mass? What language should I use to make my message more understandable. Is there any media, which could bridge people's mind and reach to their heart? They say "how you see others is a reflection of yourself". So I supposed, like many, that the way to everyone's heart is through his or her stomach! My professional life in the last few years has been to examine and prove that assumption. This thesis is also established based on such a hypothesis.

When in 2013 I proposed the thesis, regardless of my inner belief and sincere passion, I knew very little about the true power of food. That was the time when



Fig. 1

Kismet™ by Fazer®
(fi.wikipedia.org, 2020)

I heard about the new discipline called Food Design (a discipline with still an unknown territory) for the first time. Watching Marije Vogelzang's TedTalk and projects was enough to convince me that food design is what I want to dedicate my time and life on (Vogelzang is the pioneer food designer). I felt that I found the universal medium to tell my own story (and later help others to tell theirs too). Culinary world looked like an undiscovered land of opportunity for my creativity. At that moment my adventurous life took a new sharp detour and soon I was going from one kitchen to

another. In the meanwhile my grandma (who passed away a couple of years ago) was annoying me with her question "If you were going to become a cook why did you leave Iran in the first place?" My answer was: Kismet*.

*"kismet /'kɪz.met/ ,noun [U], a force that some people think controls what happens in the future, and is outside human control" (dictionary.cambridge.org).

Grape (Lingual Barrier)

Migration is inevitable. Moving from one geographical location to another has been part of humans' life for millennia. Migration (voluntarily or forcibly) has its own advantages and disadvantages. A new arrival migrant is a decontextualized alien. Establishing life in a new piece of land with a new climate, even empty of any human beings, is challenging enough. Adding to this people who already live there have their own rules, culture and traditions (in Finland, which is almost an empty land, still there are many issues!) makes the situation more complicated. But none of these

challenges have stopped people from migrating. Hosts might not mind for a while to tolerate the new arrivals but in the long term the problems arise. New life is equally challenging for both sides but in different ways. The new situation disturbs both sides' welfare and peace of mind. They have to find a way to live together, redefine their territories, rules, routines and so on to live peacefully together (until newer new-arrivals arrive).

Stereotypes, prejudices, misunderstandings, cultural differences and lack of common language can

easily trigger social clashes (from minor gestures to bloodsheds) in such a volatile atmosphere. Neither migration nor the problems related to it is a new phenomena. Rumi the Persian poet from the 13th century has an inspiring story about miscommunication and lack of a common language. He describes a situation which would be easily applicable in the 21st century too:

Once upon a time, somebody gave four poor men a coin. The Persian one said, let's buy 'angur'", the Turkish one said "No! I want 'uzum'", the Arab said "No! we should buy 'enab'" and the Greek said "I'm going to buy 'styfli'". They could not agree and started to fight. A wiseman who was passing by suggested them to give him the coin to solve the conflict. They did so and he bought for them a bowl of grapes. The four men got happy since they had just been wishing for the same thing in four different languages (Rūmī and

Mojaddedi, 2008).

The described, exaggerated, situation in the story is in fact the core of many conflicts in the world: misunderstanding, miscommunication and lack of a common language. Despite all the differences all humans, more or less, have very similar needs and wishes. In those kinds of situations if there would be a way to bridge the lingual and cultural barriers, many of the problems could be solved. The four angry men could not realise that they all were craving grapes until they saw them. The bowl of grapes went beyond the language barrier. In many cases the solution could be as easy as bringing a bowl of grapes for the people to share. Unfortunately, the bitter irony here is that still after 800 years the three nations: Iranians, Afghans and Turkish argue about the poet's nationality -they disagree about where he was actually from. May a bottle of fermented grapes bring peace!

Villagers of the Future

Here we are, in the year 2020. The number of the year reminds of science fiction novels and movies of my generation. The year that cars would fly, Mars would be colonized, we would take pills instead of food,

etc. Many of these things have not happened yet, but instead many other things have come to our lives that were not mentioned in the novels. Information explosion, internet, social media, smartphones, cheap flights and

so on make us villagers of McLuhan's global village (McLuhan, 2001). There is the feeling that the world has never been this small and well-connected. We live with the feelings that you can freely live and work wherever you wish and you are aware and well-informed instantly. Most of these feelings are true (at least for some of us) but the problem is as McLuhan was insisting, that the electronic media retriblised human beings and returned them to pre-alphabetic oral traditions (Griffin, 2003). The tribal affiliations and behaviors are back, this time powered by the extremely influential social media. New tribes have their own online platforms and organisations. The new villagers are arguing, fighting, insulting, raping, excuting, torturing and killing each other for excuses as ridiculous as a bowl of grapes while they are streaming the incident live via their smartphones.

McLuhan claims that in the contemporary pre-alphabetic era too hearing and touch dominated the human beings' senses more than sight. It was the era when feelings became more important than thoughts (ibid.). He might have changed his mind if he had had the chance to carry a smartphone in his pocket all the time. Nowadays human beings' senses have been reduced to gentle tactile feelings on the tip of a few fingers. The stare at the screen with earphones has also totally segregated them from their immediate surroundings. In the age of social media and 5G, with virtual reality goggles on and smartphones in hand, a bowl of real grapes might have a significant impact.

“TELL ME WHAT KIND
OF FOOD YOU EAT,
AND I WILL TELL YOU
WHAT KIND OF MAN
YOU ARE.”

Brillat-Savarin

(2000, p. 3, cited in Cramer, Greene and Walters, 2011)

3

HOW?

How?

This chapter is about finding the right research methods for this thesis. The novelty of the topic, the obscurity of the field of food design and the complexity of food itself made it challenging to find the right methods and sources for conducting the research.

Research Methods

Food by nature is a multidisciplinary phenomenon. A plate of ordinary food is the outcome of collaboration of hundreds of people from totally different backgrounds. A truck driver and nutritional scientist might not have much to share in their daily life but their role in bringing food to the plate are equally important. Such a complex topic does not fit in one or two disciplines. The situation with studies on food is very similar to the story of 'an elephant in the dark'. The complexity of food demands the collaboration of researchers from different fields of study to provide a holistic image about the issue.

Because of the inherent complexity of food, for making this study, finding a research framework which would cover the multidimensional nature of food is very important. Scholars from several human science backgrounds

have than impressive studies on social, psychological, anthropological, etc. aspects of food. As a design researcher this study tries to gather all those individuals studies next to each other around the topic of food to construct a comprehensive picture of food as a whole on the context of communication in general and visual communication specifically.

By these explanations, constructive design research is the right method to employ for this study. Constructive design research is "design research in which construction –be it product, system, space, or media–takes center place and becomes the key means in constructing knowledge" (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 5).

This research originally started in 2014. Six years ago the outcome could not have looked like it is now.

Back then I was very passionate about food design and sincerely wanted to do research to find out how food possibly would work as a communication medium. However, there was a minor problem: I was not at all knowledgeable about the field. A pure passion took this research to the field of real life and business to observe the function of food in its own original context; life. The initial idea for the research was to organise a series of workshops, document them in the shape of a blog/website/book and add some literature review as a side dish. But such a plan would be humiliating myself against the immensity of the culinary world. I had to sweat and burn my hands shoulder by shoulder with chefs and kitchen staff, in smoky hot kitchens for ridiculously low salaries to learn how food comes to my plate. I did not want to be an outsider in the food business so I had to prove to the hardworking chefs that I am one of them. The information collected during these empirical research is the main source to carry out the current research. After six years, many of the theoretical materials that I had to review recently, sounded more like memories.

This research is qualitative. It includes a comprehensive literature review that provides a more clear idea about the previous research done on food from a communicational point of view. There is much valuable research on

food, but findind any research on it as a communication medium looked impossible. Therefore, the literature review, which forms a central part of this thesis and which does not only offer conclusions on food as a communication medium but also builds a much needed theoretical framework for food design, includes sources from various human science studies, gastronomy and design. The lack of sources on food design itself indicates a great opportunity (and necessity) for further research and works as the reason to start building such a framework as part of this thesis.

At the end of the studies two case studies are explained to show how these theories are reflected in real life. The first one is a series of workshops, which was carried out during 2015. The second case is the Persikka project, which took place in 2018-2019. Persikka itself includes three individual projects with the same goal but different approaches.

4

WHO?

Who?

This chapter is about the role of food designers, which will stay unclear as long as the territory of food design is undefined. Who is a food designer? A chef? A food stylist? An artist? The chapter tries to justify the position of a food designer in the changing universe of design.

Food Design (A New Title for a Chef?)

The constantly growing consumerist culture has affected the human beings' life and environment dramatically since its beginning in the 1950s. A very promising-looking journey in the beginning, it has ended up to the point in which human beings have become a threat for their own existence and that of the whole planet. The self-consciousness of the design field, which has been one of the main contributors to the stuff-oriented culture, has started to get alarmed in the recent past. Design's main focus, with its craftsmanship background, has naturally been that of making 'stuff'. The changing marketplace has brought a set of totally new challenges to the designers, in contrast with their object-oriented background. Traditional design disciplines are transforming fundamentally to respond to the current problem. New design disciplines' main focus is the 'purpose of designing' rather than making

stuff (Fig. 2). The current challenges for contemporary designers are how to heal, to serve and to transform (Sanders and Stappers, 2016).

The new design disciplines are very keen to tackle more holistic domains. The very complex nature of the current problems require the cooperation of people from totally different backgrounds, including design and non-design (ibid.).

Food design is one of the newly emerging disciplines. Defining the role, definition and territory of food design is a mutual challenge of those who call themselves food designers. For people out of the design world bubble, food design is equivalent to food styling, which makes designers mad since they feel undermined if someone considers their job as making something more attractive and beautiful. Food by nature is a very

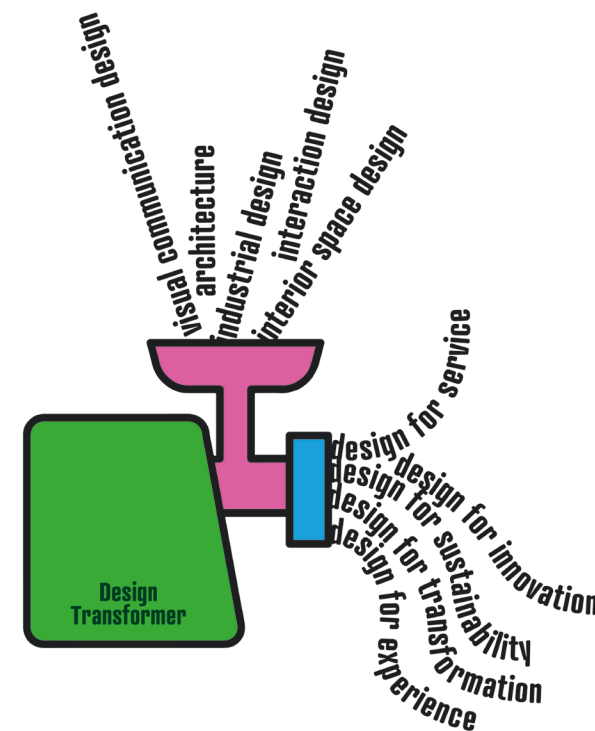


Fig. 2

Transformation of the design disciplines from old to new
[reproduced diagram]

(Sanders and Stappers, 2016, p. 17)

complicated phenomenon. Bringing food to the table is the outcome of collaboration between a wide range of experts from totally different fields. All the stakeholders in the food and beverage business have already established roles with very clear job descriptions such as cook/chef, farmer, butcher, brewer, baker, food scientist, nutritionist, etc. The designers, artists and craftsmen/women have had their own role in that sector too as, for example, package designers, product designers, ceramic artists, furniture

designers, interior designers, food stylists, food photographers and graphic designers.

So what is food design and is it an authentic design discipline? Until now the answer to this question has been quite subjective. Designers, depending on their own background and interest, propose their own definition. Obviously food design has overlapped with several established categories in the culinary world too.

That is why some chefs have started to call themselves food designers. The reality is that the beginning of the 21st century is professionally very confusing whether the field you are talking about is new or old. The well-established professions are dying out while new, before unheard professional titles keep appearing. All the sectors try to redefine their role in the new marketplace. The relatively new-born food design is not an exception. We assume that food design is an infant design discipline with little history, unclear path and future, but real. For sure it is not food styling or being a chef or any other already existing profession. In any case drawing firm borders between any of these disciplines sounds impossible since tight collaboration, exchange of ideas and getting inspiration from colleagues beyond one's "own field" is making the old-fashion professional borders vanish.

With that in mind there is no need to prove if 'food design' is design or not. Thus, this study focuses on the communicational aspect of food; a dimension, which definitely needs broader research in order to release food's undiscovered potential as a communication medium. When a visual communication designer decides to become a food designer, he is naturally interested in food as a communication medium and a storytelling tool. Food as an artistic medium is not at all a new topic, but food as a communication medium certainly is. Although scholars from human sciences have already acknowledged the importance of food as a form of nonverbal communication tool, it has not attracted the attention of communication experts for some reason. It is, in fact, a very interesting question why food as a form of communication is undermined.

“ [DESIGN] MAKE[S]
PEOPLE EXPERIENCE
SOMETHING THAT
DOES NOT YET
QUITE EXIST, IN
INCREASINGLY
COMPLEX CONTEXTS
OF USE. ”

Design Things

((Binder, T, Ehn, P, & Jacucci, G 2011, p. 6)

5

WHAT?

What?

Food is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, which deals with values beyond nutrition. This chapter is an introduction to such a holistic perspective to food.

Food Beyond Fuel

Obtaining food to survive is the most basic and fundamental activity of human beings (and any other living creature). The main concern of a human being is where and how to get a piece of bread to not starve. The existential importance of food is untouched, although it is difficult to recognise such a straightforward relation in the industrialized societies. The wide accessibility of food has made citizens of modern societies take it for granted (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

Food is, thus, a primary part of human life. Basic cooking skills can be obtained with minimum practice and eating skills do not require even that (ibid.). Humans' relation with food is as natural as their relation with their own language. This extreme closeness causes them to neglect the complexity of the system that they are dealing with. The complex system of signs

and rules is anything but natural. For understanding the system, Roland Barthes suggests that you should find a way in which meanings are combined and cooked: "the kitchen of meaning" (1988, cited in ibid.). Levi-Strauss explains more about the magic, which happens in that kitchen. He draws attention to the transformational process, which a naturally grown ingredient goes through in order to be converted into a cultural product [check his culinary triangle diagram in Time & food section] (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

Within the last few decades the relation of modern human beings with their food has changed dramatically, even though it is still far from what Bruno Martino was singing in 1959; "In the year two thousand/we'll no longer eat/either steak/or spaghetti with ragu/we'll take four pills/and just

like that/our hunger will disappear..." (Raimondi, 2011). Food is not just fuel. Food has its own primary function as the source of nutrition but that is not all. As Douglas, the well-known food anthropologist mentions,

if biology was the only criteria for humans' dietary choices, there would be very similar diets around the world (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

Is Food a Communication Medium?

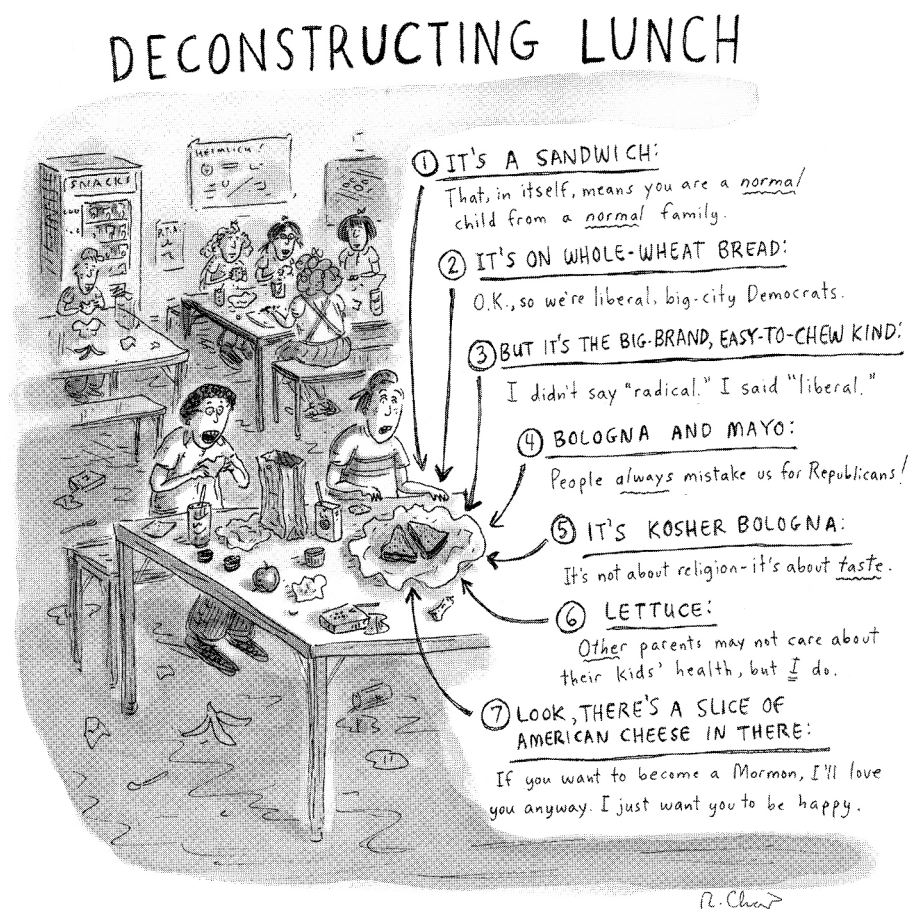
Food has been a subject of studies in the variety of human science disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, cultural history, etc., for a long time. Many of the scholars and researchers of those disciplines have emphasized the communicational aspect of food and encouraged researchers from communication backgrounds to carry out further studies on food from that perspective. For instance, Henderson who has conducted studies on food to show how and why food and practices around it should be considered as a form of communication is one of them (Cramer, Greene and Walters, 2011). Barthes recommends that food be considered as "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior..." (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 86). Leeds-Hurwitz concludes that "there is no doubt that food is used for communication purposes

just as language is, just as other aspects of nonverbal communication are" (1993, p. 101). She argues that communication researchers' neglect does not change the importance of food as a communication medium. She encourages the researchers to work on the topic and she points out that the majority of the studies, which have been done so far, focus on one specific food or issue. She believes that the future studies should take the bigger picture into consideration (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

In fact, this study is a response to the call of all the above mentioned scholars. Clearly communication researchers, especially those with a design background, undermine the importance of food in that sense. The question is: why has food not received enough attention from designers and communication experts? Probably one of the most important reasons is that

food has been seen as an 'ordinary' matter of daily life. Raymond Williams describes culture as 'ordinary' to show that some of the most important elements of daily life of human beings, such as food, are taken for granted and are overlooked (Cramer, Greene and Walters, 2011) in his book "Resources

of Hope". Thanks to the abundance, accessibility and affordability of food in the developed societies, there is not an anti-environment for food to recognize its existence. As McLuhan put it, "one thing about which fish know exactly nothing is water" (McLuhan, M., Fiore, Q., 2001).



© The New Yorker Collection 2000 Roz Chast from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.

Fig. 3

Deconstructing Lunch [photocopy of the source]

(Griffin, 2003, p. 361)

The geography, climate, beliefs, famines, abundances, birthdays, baptisms, weddings and funerals are all embedded in the ordinary food that we eat everyday. During a long period of time many of the dishes have lost their original meaning or found totally new meaning irrelevant to what they used to have. The same happens with the vocabulary in a language. With time, some words get out of date, forgotten or associated with new meaning in different contexts. As Mennel puts it, "taste is culturally shaped and socially controlled" (1985, p. 6, cited in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). Societies constantly change and thus, so does food. Sometimes a certain food loses its meaning or historical context but still stays popular. For instance, there are popular dishes in different cuisines, which once were developed out of scarcity and poverty but remained popular despite the new circumstances. Sometimes people are

still attached to the meaning but under new circumstances decide to change the recipe fundamentally (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). One example of this in Finland is the vegan ham, which was recently introduced to the market to replace the traditional Christmas ham. In this example, the emotional attachment to Christmas food is untouched, but because of climate change and the concerns about animal rights and environmental issues, the Christmas food recipe is changed dramatically.

There is a third scenario too in which, in the long term, the food keeps its symbolic meaning and communicational value. Some of the sacramental foods in different religions have, for example, kept their meaning and function (relatively) untouched across centuries. An example of those kinds of food will be mentioned later.

What is Communication?

The Latin root of the term communication suggests that communication is an activity to create commonness with someone (Lee, 2020). A predictable situation would not create communication. In other words, if both sides agree about a particular subject, the commonness

is already there. "Information is a measure of uncertainty, or entropy, in a situation" (Shkaminski.com, 2020). Communication is the exchange of information in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty to reach to the commonness (ibid.).

In case of cross-cultural situations the level of uncertainty is naturally very high, which means a greater opportunity for having an active communication to reduce the amount of uncertainty. The question is: how to create an efficient cross-cultural communication to create more peace and tolerance among different groups of people? Uncertainty, which is the motive of initiating a communication, is a barrier to initiate a communication in a cross-cultural context. It looks like there are two kinds of uncertainty: positive and negative. But would it be possible to convert the negative to the positive? I would argue that yes; by using uncertainty, which is embedded in the dishes created and based on the

modernist cuisine's philosophy, we can bridge the two opposing uncertainties together and create efficient culinary communication.

The main reason to consider food as a type of communication is its deep interconnection with culture and rituals. Rothenbuhler defines ritual as "the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behavior to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life" (1998, p. 27, cited in Cramer, Greene and Walters, 2011). Culinary dialogue is a great opportunity that can be used in the middle of cultural clashes to reduce tension.

“TASTE IS
CULTURALLY
SHAPED AND
SOCIALLY
CONTROLLED.”

Mennel
(1985, p. 6, cited in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993)

6

FOOD AS A COMMUNICATION MEDIUM

Food as a Communication Medium

In this chapter food will be analysed from two different perspectives, in order to understand its nature as a communication medium. Following Leeds-Hurwitz ideas, at macro-level food is more than just an artifact on a plate. In the big picture, it is a combination of material and immaterial, which connects individuals to each other. The concept of Design as Thinging, along with McLuhan's media theory, are used to explain such a complicated system.

The other perspective is the micro-level perspective, which explains how food functions in transmitting a message. Different communication models are taken into consideration to find the optimum one, which could explain food as a communication medium. The elements of the models are analysed to define their importance in a culinary communication process. Finally the field of intercultural communication will be discussed further to find out what are the challenges in the way of communication between people from different cultural backgrounds.

Combining the findings from both angles provides a better understanding of the complex nature of food as a communication medium.

The Macro-level

Food as Thinging

Food on a plate is a physical entity. Studying food in the context of a plate is subject to the traditional design disciplines and craftsmanship masteries. Product designers, chefs, culinary artists, ceramists, food stylists, interior designers, furniture designers, photographers, bakers, brewers, food scientists, and nutritionists provide and present that physical matter perfectly by using their skills. From this perspective, food is the outcome of making 'stuff' process.

Such an approach to food has been working properly until a couple of decades ago. In the modern industrialized societies, food is accessible, abundant and hygienic. A variety of products and ingredients are brought from the four corners of the world to the closest grocery in every single neighbourhood. The only concern used to be how to earn enough money to be able to buy the

items on the shelves. But the situation is changing rapidly. The very same synergy and demand, which turned the design field upside down, is shaking the food and beverage world too. Consumers demand beyond stuff even with their food, which is a basic need to sustain their physical existence. They are looking for experiences more than stuff. They question the origin of their food and its influence on the environment in the long run. They are looking for more customised and personalised diets and products. Self-watchdogs of transparency, global warming, equality, child labor, human rights and animal rights control the shopping baskets carefully. In short, the consumers want to be more than mere consumers; they demand to become once again active role players in the food ecosystem. Their concern is the big picture.

Food goes beyond the plate when

diners, rituals, cultures, emotions, interactions, symbols, farmers, transporters, animals, plants, climate, politics, etc. are brought to the picture. A culinary experience is a broader picture ungraspable within the traditional design disciplines. It goes beyond tangible things. In that sense food is a complex combination of materials and immaterials. "The social-cultural world is made up of a combination of the immaterial (ideas and words) and the material (things)" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 78). Such a culinary experience is describable by the "thinging" process. Pelle Ehn, the co-author of "Design Things" (MIT Press, 2011), argues that, in fact, design is "thinging". Seeing food design from this perspective helps to understand the role of a food designer in a broader picture.

Thinging is a response to the challenge that contemporary designers face. The changing marketplace demands less 'things' but more and more things. The etymological approach to the English term 'thing' goes back to its ancient German and Nordic origins when "things were assemblies, rituals, and places where disputes were solved and political decisions made" (Binder, T, Ehn, P, & Jacucci, G 2011, p. 1). Things are "collectives of humans and non-humans" (Latour 1999, cited in, Binder, T, Ehn, P, & Jacucci, G 2011, p. 157), sociomaterial assemblages. The concept of thing emphasises

the existence of diverse perspectives, opinions and stakeholders (otherwise there was not any necessity to have a thing to negotiate the concerns). Design as thinging mobilizes collaborations since things are multidimensional, multidisciplinary and multi-sensory.

Food on a plate is just a thing but beyond the plate is a thing. "Bread on a table is not just a meal; it is also the hands weary from a full day's work dropping the knife, the children telling stories from school, the remembrance of youth in tasting a familiar dish" (Binder, T, Ehn, P, & Jacucci, G 2011, p. 53). Seeing food from "thinging" perspective provides a holistic view to the complex nature of food as a sociocultural enterprise. "As Heidegger claims, 'thinging' gathers human beings, and things are events in the life of a community and play a central role in their common experience" (Binder, T, Ehn, P, & Jacucci, G 2011, p. 52). His claim nicely explains the function of food as a communal phenomenon in the daily life of communities.

Food as a thing is an inseparable whole. In the post-consumerism era, the food on the plate cannot be consumed without taking in the extension of it beyond the plate. The contemporary diner/consumer expects to know the whole journey of his/her food from farm to plate, because s/

“THE MEDIUM
IS THE MESSAGE.”

Marshall McLuhan
(2001)

he is aware of the value of the food beyond its nutritional value. S/he well knows that consuming that food will send a message about his/her political views, social groups, opinions about human and animal rights, climate change and so on. That thing on the plate is a clear statement of who s/he is. The message transmitted with food on the plate, as an artifact, is coded in a language inseparable from the medium itself, as Rogan describes, “in a more subtle, elegant, discreet or economical way than a natural language is capable of” (Rogan, 1992, cited in Binder, T, Ehn, P, & Jacucci, G 2011, p. 32).

That thing on a plate, as a medium, reminds McLuhan’s controversy quote that “the medium is the message” (2001, p. 7). He argues that even an electric light bulb is a medium as it is, regardless of its content or message. From his point of view the message of any medium is the ‘change’ that it brings to human affairs. The electric light bulb revolutionized the world and people’s lifestyle although it was not the first to introduce light (its content) to humans’ life (ibid.).

So, if food is a medium, what kind of change has it brought (and constantly brings) to human beings’ lives? The physiological and evolutionary changes that food caused on the human species intentionally will be ignored. The fact that food changes the status of

every human being every day from nearly dead to alive would be ignored too. Although the latter one is not that obvious in wealthy and healthy societies but unfortunately is a daily reality for more than 820 millions (or 1 in 9 people) around the globe (WHO.int, 2020). For the purpose of this study the focus will remain only on cultural, social and behavioral changes caused by food.

Brillat-Savarin in his book “The Physiology of Taste” writes: “tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are” (2000, p. 3, cited in Cramer, Greene and Walters, 2011). What he says resembles the popular saying that “you are what you eat” [although in 2020 what you do not eat is equally expressive]. In other words, ‘your food shapes you’, which resonates with McLuhan’s another famous claim, “we shape our tools and they in turn shape us” (Griffin, 2003, p. 344). By putting these two together would it not be possible to say that we shape our food and they in turn shape us?, which would be a description of the symbiotic relationship between the human and food in the context of nature. The current environmental challenges and shortage of natural resources is evidence for such a tight relationship. The health issues caused by consumption of processed foods, sugar-saturated soft drinks, unhealthy fast foods and so on show how the

food that we shaped, shapes us in return.

There is a constant change and counterchange—interaction—going on among the food on plate, its surrounding and all involved stakeholders. The result of this dynamic system is a thing that goes beyond mere nutritional function of food. It dramatically influences the environment, shapes the experience of diners/consumers and defines their relationship with those who brought the food to their plate. The thing on the plate is a cultural artifact that elevates thoughts and behaviours of the participants (Binder, T, Ehn, P, & Jacucci, G 2011).

Similar to what McLuhan claimed about channels of communication, food on a plate as a communication medium could be considered as one of “the primary cause of cultural change” (Griffin, 2003, p. 343). He believes that it is the medium that formalizes and defines the size and form of humans’ communities and their activities. Food dramatically has affected the size, form and dynamics of human communities during the history of mankind and its impact still goes on.

The concerns about the impact, instead of the meaning, is a fundamental change in the new era. Kenneth Boulding boldly prioritizes

the total effect of a message to its content by saying in his book, “The Image”, that “the meaning of a message is the change which it produces in the image” (cited in McLuhan, 1964, p. 28). The negative impact of the food industry on the climate and the environment has already been proven. Studies on issues such as global warming show the catastrophic changes that it has already created. Human beings have already sent a [wrong] message via the medium of food by how they treated the environment. Food is a medium that has already affected the human communities in the different corners of the world and caused fundamental cultural changes and will cause more of them in the future. The impact of loud, instant, and scandal-centric social media such as Facebook and Twitter in creating cultural change is undeniable and visible. Food, in term, is a quiet and gradual medium whose negative impact can be catastrophic.

Seeing food from a bird-eye-view reveals a puzzling web of humans and nonhumans tightly interconnected through food. Stimulating a segment on the web will cause a change in the whole network including the receiver who has the plate in front of her/him. On the food web, every single plate on the table is interconnected to the surrounding plates and all the plates beyond that table.

“THE MEANING OF
A MESSAGE IS THE
CHANGE WHICH IT
PRODUCES IN THE
IMAGE.”

Kenneth Boulding
(cited in McLuhan, 1964, p. 28)

The Micro-level

Why Communication Models

For understanding the functionality of food as a communication medium, it is helpful to first break down food into its components. There are seven major communication theories to explain the process of communication. One of those is socio-psychological tradition which considers communication as interpersonal influence. Carl Hovland who is one of the founders of this tradition, describes communication as a process that one individual tries to cause 'behavioral change' in another individual by transmitting stimulus (Lee, 2020). This theory has potential to explain the function of food as a cross-cultural form of communication. Scholars in this tradition measure the effectiveness of communication by measuring the opinion change based on attitude scales collected before and after communication. They developed the Yale Attitude Change model as their framework to describe

the communication process: who says what to whom and with what effect. (Griffin, 2003)

Persuasive message and persuasive communication, which have been studied within this tradition, are very close to the current study's approach to food as a form of communication. Hence, their framework could be adopted in a culinary context like this: who cooks what to whom and with what effect. Persuasion is at the core of culinary communication. Based on the findings of Yale researchers, in interpersonal persuasive communication cases, the expertness and character of the source (who) are the main origins of credibility (ibid.). Probably in the context of food, similar characteristics make a source credible too. For example, what would be the effect of a terrible food prepared by an angry and grumpy cook who

does not know how to cook? One more point to keep in mind is that within the process of communication, 'who' at the same time is 'whom' and vice versa (since we consider that there should be a dialogue).

The next step would be finding the most suitable communication model, which would correspond to food as a form of communication. Communication studies is a well developed discipline. There are several models and theories available that could potentially describe the communicational aspect of food. "A model is a systematic representation of an object or event in idealized and abstract form [...]. The key to the usefulness of a model is the degree to which it conforms—in point-by-point correspondence—to the underlying determinants of communicative behavior" (Mortensen, 1972, p. 29-30) He continues that a good model gives a holistic picture while providing a more detailed image of the components. Such a model can help to analyse and understand the system better. The advantage of having a good model is more significant when the

subject of study is more complicated. It makes the complexity more understandable and coherent but that does not mean that the complexity of the matter is oversimplified (Mortensen, 1972).

A good model provides a better understanding of a complex system, but it should be taken into consideration that modeling has its own disadvantage. Models are snapshots of dynamic systems; the continuous actions and interactions in the system cannot be captured in a static diagram. As mentioned before, there is a risk of oversimplification. A model is just for understanding the system -the system does not have to work according to the model. Having a model does not mean that you know the phenomenon fully (Shkaminski. com, 2020).

It is important to know that it is possible to borrow useful features from different models to create a hybrid model which can explain the phenomenon better (Mortensen, 1972).

Choosing the Right Model

Communication models are created to explain different phenomena. They have some features, which are shared among many of them, but there are also some factors that exclusively belong to one particular model.

The Shannon and Weaver model (Fig. 4) is the most common one in explaining the low-level

communication cases (Shkaminski.com, 2020). This model does not consider the sociological and psychological dimensions of communication, therefore, obviously it cannot explain a sociocultural matter such as food [back to 2014 when for the first time I proposed the topic of the thesis, I illustrated the idea of food as a communication

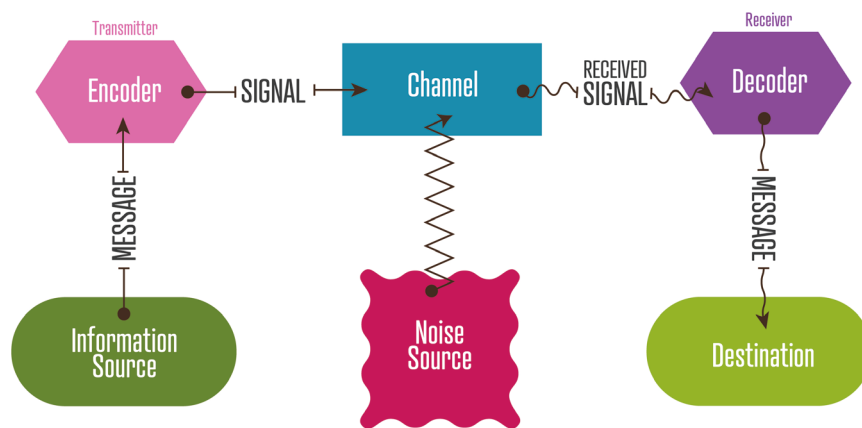


Fig. 4

The Shannon and Weaver model's model of communication [reproduced diagram]

(Shkaminski.com, 2020)

based on this model (Fig. 5)]. Their technical goal as engineers has been to build a communication device with nearly 100% efficiency. That's why they proposed the concept of noise that interferes with communication (Lee, 2020). Noise is any kind of information, which is not related to the original message. Noise can have different sources, such as background noise or a noisy channel. Noise can be psychological or semantic (Shkaminski.com, 2020). 'Semantic

noise' is the outcome of the difference of meanings in people's minds about a particular topic. Semantic noise is one of the major challenges on the way to sufficient communication (Lee, 2020). This noise is the source of misunderstanding, which is very important in studying food as a communication form. That is why the concept of 'noise' in general will be borrowed from Shannon and Weaver model.

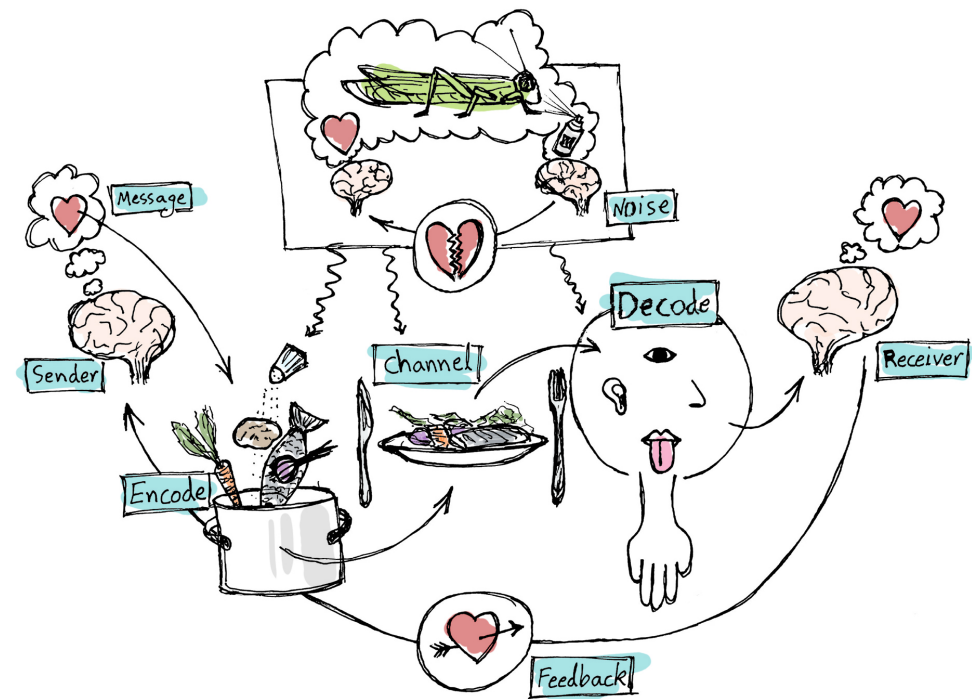


Fig. 5

Food as a communication medium based on the Shannon and Weaver's model by Vahid Mortezaei [obviously feedback had been borrowed from other models]

(www.vahidmortezaei.com, 2020)

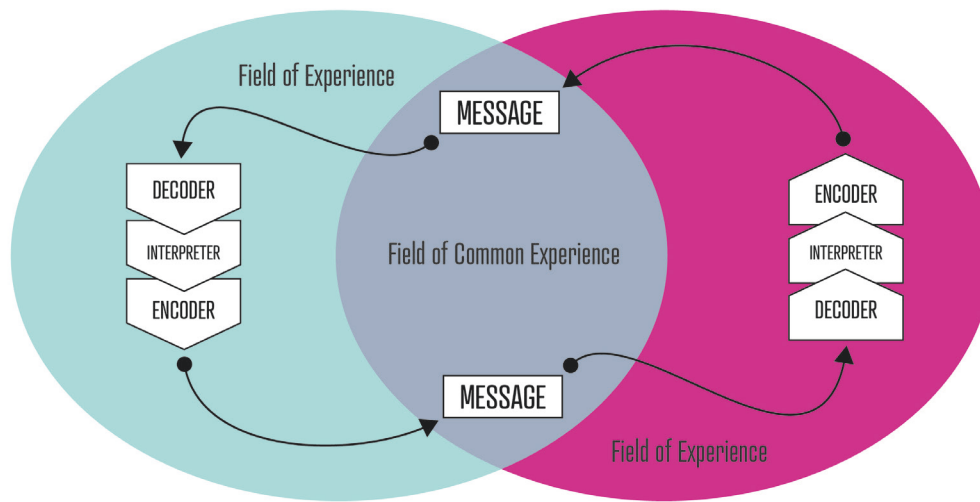


Fig. 6

Wilbur Schramm's model of communication
[reproduced diagram]
(Lee, 2020)

Wilbur Schramm in his model (Fig. 6) points out the importance of context in communication. By taking sociological aspects into consideration, he emphasizes that for achieving mutual understanding, two ends of communication should have something in common. In his opinion, if the fields of experiences of source and receiver do not overlap [enough], communication will not be sufficient, and might even be unachievable (ibid.). Schramm has been aware of the problem of 'semiotic

noise' -that is why he included an 'interpreter' between the encoder and decoder to overcome the issue of noise. Schramm recognised that communication is a two-way process (in contrast to Shannon and Weaver's one-way model) so he introduced the concept of 'feedback'. Because of the circular nature of communication, both ends of the communication are simultaneously sender and receiver. That is why this model is less linear, compared to Shannon and Weaver's model. By adding these improvements,

“A MODEL IS A
SYSTEMATIC
REPRESENTATION OF
AN OBJECT OR EVENT
IN IDEALIZED AND
ABSTRACT FORM.”

Mortensen
(1972)

the model has become capable of explaining indirect nonverbal communications such as gestures. Despite all those achievements, it is still not holistic enough to explain more complicated communication forms (Shkaminski.com, 2020).

This model is not a comprehensive one to explain food properly, but it includes very useful elements to borrow. Mainly the concept of ‘context’ will be borrowed from this, since in culinary communication it is an extremely important factor to consider. The importance of context

will be discussed further separately by studying Edward T. Hall’s high-context/low-context theory. The idea of circular communication and the importance of feedback is another element that will be kept for building the hybrid model.

David K. Berlo developed the SMCR model (Berlo model), which is also essentially based on the Shannon-Weaver model (Fig. 7). The importance of the SMCR model is that it includes psychological factors in it (Lee, 2020). High fidelity is what a communicator hopes to achieve.

Fidelity is the guarantee that the communicator will accomplish what s/he wishes. “Noise and fidelity are two sides of the same coin. Eliminating noise increases fidelity” (Berlo, 1960, p. 40). He acknowledges that communication is a two-way process and the message that every participant sends is based on the message that s/he has already received (exchanging feedback) (Berlo, 1960). Berlo analyses further the influential parameters on the fidelity of communication. He draws attention to at least four agents that influence the fidelity of source and receiver: communication skills, attitudes (toward self, toward subject

matter, toward receiver), knowledge level and social-cultural system [context] (ibid.).

The Berlo model is an evolutionary version of the previous models. Berlo includes the five senses too in the channel/medium, which are crucial factors in analysing culinary experiences since food is a multisensory phenomenon. This model has the potential to become the backbone of the hybrid model for describing culinary communication process. The elements of noise and context from the two other models will be attached to this one to have a better understanding of the dynamic of food as a communication medium.

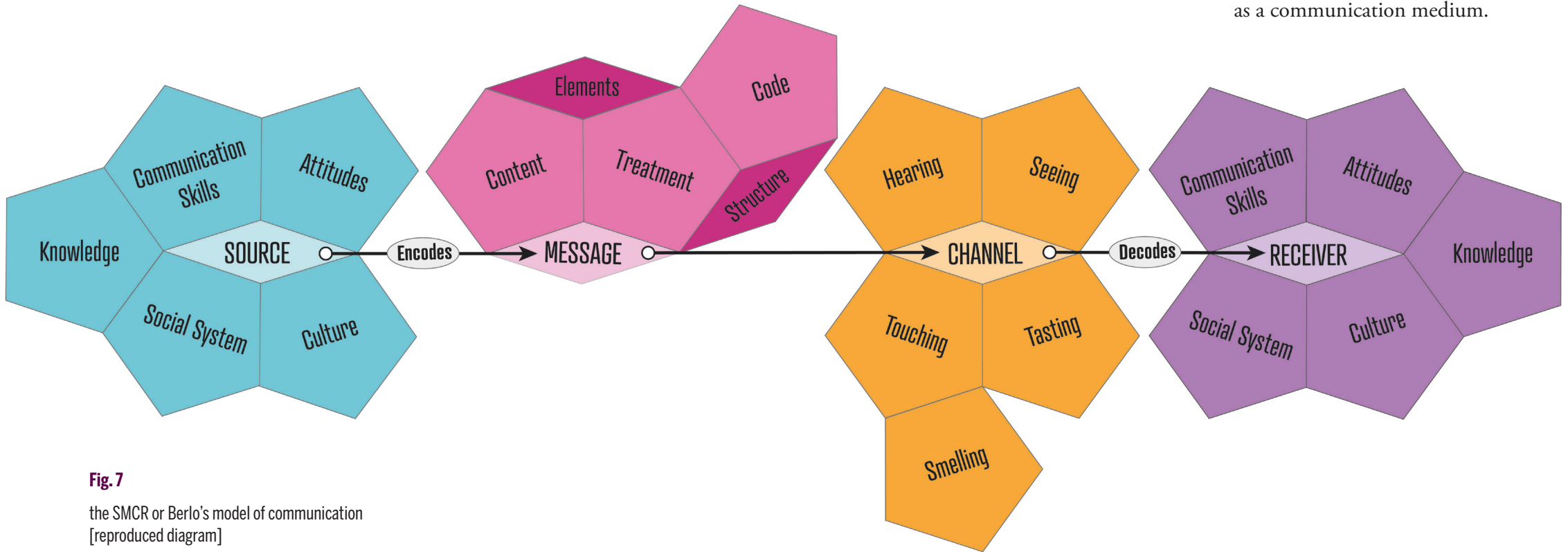


Fig. 7
the SMCR or Berlo’s model of communication
[reproduced diagram]
(Shkaminski.com, 2020)

The Anatomy of Communication

Communication starts from a source, who tries to transmit a question, request, command, or idea. The source can be, for example an individual, a group of people or an organization [a source can even be a plant. Imagine the hanging leaves of a plant in a pot, with which it tries to communicate to us that it needs to get some water]. The operational quality of a source is dependent on its sociocultural context, which was briefly mentioned before. Depending on the employed medium, communication skills are equally very important (e.g. if the medium is food, you should know how to use it properly). Attitudes are extremely important parameters in the effectiveness of communication: attitudes toward yourself, the medium (here food), toward the audience, the physical space, time, the discussed subject and any elements involved in the communication process. The

knowledge about the subject matter and all the aspects of the process and stakeholders are also influential. The educational background, income level, memories, traumas, network of friends, religious and political background and climate are all important. In a nutshell, whatever can influence the source, should be taken into consideration (Lee, 2020). This list illustrates the complexity of modeling a communication process and the risk of oversimplification of a complex system.

The other side of the communication process is a receiver. The same features and characteristics as the source are required for the receiver too. It is worth to mention again that both ends of the process are simultaneously a source and a receiver although they might not have the same role (e.g. chef and diner). The receiver should

have the communication skills (e.g. if the chef cooks well, the diner should be able to taste well). Their attitudes are equally important. Having similar backgrounds or being aware of the background differences are important too since the receiver's background (cultural context) will influence its interpretation of the received message (ibid.). The receiver should be able to receive and interpret the received message (Nordquist, 2019).

The message is a piece of information (content) that the source tries to deliver to the receiver. These information should be packed (encoded) in proper units (codes). It is important to use the right kind of code, depending on the circumstances, to send a particular message. The receiver should be able to understand (to decode) the message. The code should suit the quality of message and type of the channel. A poor choice of a code causes the communication to fail (Lee, D., 2020).

“In the communication process, a medium is a channel or system of communication—the means by which information (the message) is transmitted between a speaker or writer (the sender) and an audience (the receiver). The plural form is media, and the term is also known as a channel” (Nordquist, 2019). A channel can be one of the five senses or a combination of them. The

importance and function of senses in culinary communication will be discussed further. The number of channels and their type relies on the purpose of communication. Carefully tailored messages are more effective on the receiver. Sometimes channels could be considered as the device or method used for transmitting the message: poster, radio, Facebook, letter -or in this case, food (Lee, 2020).

“The battle against uncertainty depends upon the number of alternative possibilities the message eliminates”, writes Shkaminski (Shkaminski.com, 2020). The channel capacity is the ultimate level of data that a channel can transfer (ibid.). Understanding the capacity of food as a communication medium requires thorough studies and research.

Feedback is a very important element of the communication process. Feedback makes sure that the communication is going forward in the right direction and at the end of the process will notify the source that the message has been successfully delivered, received, and comprehended by the receiver (Nordquist, 2019). Feedback plays an undeniable role in the culinary world. For instance in the culinary world in case of dining the guests, chefs try to collect feedback via indirect and direct methods to make sure that everything is going on as planned. [Personally, if I need honest

feedback from the diners, I check the dirty dishes, which come back to the dishwashing area. Dirty dishes give a clear idea about the diners opinion about food and service. If I notice that, for example, carrots on several empty

plates return back to the kitchen, I as a chef will know that there is something wrong with carrots. It has also happened that I have received written feedback on an empty plate (Fig. 8) or on a napkin].



Fig. 8

AAA Feedback on the plate, Feed/Back art performance

© Jenni Holma (www.vahidmortezaei.com, 2020)

Context (Out of Context in the Finnish Society)

As Penelope Lively describes, migration does not happen only in geographical space but in time too. Migrants, who left their past behind and moved to a new time, will constantly feel unrooted if they cannot reconnect with their origins once a while. That is why food constructs home for migrants wherever they are (Cramer, Greene and Walters, 2011).

The Finnish society is not an easy one from an integration point of view. The language and cultural barriers make it difficult to feel home. Many immigrants face a cultural shock in this society. Nevertheless, not everyone has the same experience since immigration and integration are unique personal experiences. But being able to communicate efficiently with local people before learning their language and cultural details would be very helpful. Knowing the

fact that human beings are similar in many ways while they have their own specifications would solve many problems and cultural clashes between 'us' and 'them'.

Intercultural communication is a field of communication that studies the process of sharing information between different cultural and social groups. Edward T. Hall, the founder of the field, emphasizes the importance of context in the efficiency (or failure) of intercultural communication. He recognises that different cultures value direct and indirect communication differently. Based on that observation he categorizes cultures to high-context and low-context (Southeastern University Online, 2016).

In a high-context culture understanding a message comprehensively depends on a great

deal of background knowledge of that culture. In those kinds of cultures nonverbal communication plays an important role. The amount of information transferred by words is not enough to understand a message (ibid.). Collectivist cultures have

these kinds of characteristics and are considered as high-context cultures (Griffin, 2003). African, Asian, Latin American and Eastern European cultures go under this category (Southeastern University Online, 2016).

In contrast to what has been mentioned above, communication in a low-context culture is direct, accurate and clear. The message transmits almost all the necessary information. Little background knowledge is

needed to understand the message. The cultural context has little influence on communication. individualistic cultures such as Western European cultures are located in this group (ibid.).

C.B. Halverson's describes the characteristics of high-context cultures as:

- Association: Building relationships and gaining trust happens gradually. Group identity has priority to the personal one. Relationships are important in the sense of productivity of group works. Societies have centralized authority structures.
- Interaction: Nonverbal communication such as gestures and facial expressions are dominant. Even verbal messages are not direct. Communication is considered an artful activity to influence the audiences emotionally to encourage them to act. People are sensitive to nonverbal expressions of conflict and would take a disagreement personally.
- Territoriality: Personal privacy and personal space are not valid. People are communal and share space together.
- Temporality: Time is a flexible concept out of control of individuals. It's difficult to schedule something. There is right time for anything that will come slowly. Because of that change is a slow process.
- Learning: Several sources are used to gather information. Observing others then practicing the observations is important in the learning process (ibid.).

Again according to Halverson, in low-context cultures:

- Association: Relationships are easy to build and end. Procedures and goal play the key roles in productivity. Individual identities are valid and respected. Societies have decentralized structures.
- Interaction: Communication is a process for exchanging information and ideas. Individuals think and behave rationally so disagreements are not considered personal.
- Territoriality: Personal privacy is accepted and respected.
- Temporality: Time is a solid phenomenon. Timetables and schedules are followed carefully. Time is a personal property which can be spent or saved. Change is rapid.
- Learning: Learning happens by clear explanation and guidance of others. For gaining information, one source is employed (ibid.).

Hall reminds that all the cultures are a combination of both of them but in each culture one of these two aspects plays the main role (Griffin, 2003). Based on Hall's theory, and what has been explained above, the Finnish culture should be categorized as a low-context one. That might sound right on paper and based on stereotypes about the Finnish people but the real life experiences in the society do not correspond to this theory.

Michael Booth, in his book, *The Almost Nearly Perfect People*, points out this paradox. He explains that in the small and homogeneous Finnish society, in which the citizens have very similar backgrounds, experiences and expectations, verbal communication has been minimised significantly. Thus, the Finnish society has more high-context specifications compared to the other Nordic and Western European cultures (Booth, 2014).

The confusion about the Finnish people's behavioral patterns and habits triggered a study in the University of Helsinki. The study argues that the Finnish people have incorporated the Western European principles with Asian communication manners (Fig. 10). The researchers observed that the Finnish communication

culture obviously shows high-context properties while it has been changing toward a low-context one (Nishimura, 2008).

Booth believes that the Finnish climate, geography and the homogeneity of its population have an important role in their taciturnity



Fig. 9
Cultural categories of communication by Lewis [reproduced diagram] (Nishimura, 2008)

	USA/ West Europeans	Finns	Asians
Values	democracy	democracy	hierarchies
	self-determinism	self-determinism	fatalism
	equality for women	equality for women	males dominate
	work ethic	work ethic	work ethic
	human rights	human rights	inequality
Communication Styles	ecology	ecology	exploit environment
	extrovert	introvert	introvert
	forceful	modest	modest
	lively	quiet	quiet
	thinks aloud	thinks in silence	thinks in silence
	interrupts	doesn't interrupt	doesn't interrupt
	talkative	distrusts big talkers	distrusts big talkers
	dislikes silence	uses silence	uses silence
	truth before dipolomacy	truth before dipolomacy	diplomacy before truth
	overt body language	little body language	little body language

Fig. 10
Finnish values/communication dilemma by Lewis [reproduced diagram] (Nishimura, 2008)

(2014). It is important to consider that in terms of ethnicity, Finland is little diversified. Based on the official statistics only 7,8% of the population have any kind of foreign background (stat.fi, 2020).

facilitate efficient communication among different groups of the society. Creating a safe atmosphere to share, discuss and learn about these differentiations, could help to foster a mutual understanding in this society.

Being aware of the contextual background, variations can help to

Summary

The “Thing theory” and considering design as “thinging” in combination with the holistic approach of McLuhan to media, explains the complex nature of food and culinary acts. Food constantly changes human beings physiologically, psychologically and socially. In that sense, food is a communication medium regardless of the message that it transmits. In macro-level, the change that food creates is the actual message.

For analysing food as a communication medium in micro-level, several models were taken into consideration. Berlo’s SMCR model was found out to be the most suitable one for that purpose, since it considers the importance of the five

senses in the communication channel and the influence of parameters such as *attitudes* and *culture* on the source and receiver in the process. Due to the fact that none of the models could explain the function of food comprehensively, useful elements from the other models should be borrowed to create a hybrid model based on SMCR. For instance, *noise* from Shannon and Weaver’s model and *field of experience (context)* from Wilbur Schramm’s model were included. Because of the importance of the context of the thesis in intercultural communication, it was discussed further with taking Finnish culture as an example.

“NO HUMAN ACTIVITY
MORE PUZZLINGLY
CROSSES THE DIVIDE
BETWEEN NATION
AND CULTURE THAN
THE SELECTION OF
FOOD.”

Mary Douglas
(Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 83)

7

MULTISENSORY COMMUNICATION MEDIUM

Multisensory Communication Medium

Following the previous chapter, in the next pages, food will be studied in more detail in order to discover its capabilities as a multisensory communication medium. The role of different senses, mind and memory will be discussed further in order to understand how food can convey complicated feelings, ideas and emotions. Food's relation to identity, its role in facilitating integration and the concept of time in food will be also explored.

Food as a Medium

Despite the perception of many people, taste is not equivalent to flavor. In fact, flavor is a combination of several pieces of information collected by different senses. The gustatory receptors on the tongue only gather information about the basic five tastes (sweet, salty, bitter, sour and umami). The main portion of what is considered as the taste of food is actually distinguished by the sensors in the nose. Notes such as fruity, smoky, fishy and citrusy are detected at the olfactory epithelium. Facial nerves and oral mucosa collect information about the temperature, texture, size, shape and electrical sensations of food to create flavor. “Complex combination of the olfactory, gustatory and trigeminal sensations perceived during tasting. The flavor may be influenced by tactile, thermal, painful and/or kinaesthetic effects” (Spence, Mihalache and Levent, 2018, p. 56).

For example, in the world of chefs, the mouth-feeling of food is a very important parameter to make judgements about the quality of a dish. Spence mentions that flavor could be seen as a perceptual modality. Even hearing involves creating the enjoyment of food. The crunchy sound of crispy food such as chips is an undeniable part of the whole experience (studies show that the reason that crunchy snacks such as chips are additive is their crunchiness and sonic effect (Food Design, 2009)). Their study confirms that changing the color of food can manipulate the flavor and intensify the taste of food (ibid.).

There is a mutual agreement among the experts that flavor is a multisensory experience created in the brain. It is mistakenly believed that food accommodates flavor in itself. The reality is that food contains molecules,

which trigger the brain and create the perception of flavor. In that sense there is no big difference between color and flavor of a food. There is evidence that shows that there are differences between individuals' perceptions of particular flavors. The reasons for that are partially genetic and partly shaped by the previous food related experiences (memory) (ibid.).

The eucharist ceremony in Christianity is a fascinating example of using food for the purpose of communication. Obviously, calling wine Christ's blood and a piece of bread his flesh does not change the physical and chemical characteristics or nutritional values of wine and bread, but calling them like that embeds a strong message in both the wine and bread. At the very moment of transubstantiation, an ordinary shot of wine and a piece of bread, in a matter of seconds, are transformed into strong ideological

artifacts, which have a totally different function than that of the original wine and bread. The believers eat and drink them to change -not to solve their hunger or get drunk. “...Since nothing merges with us more intimately than food which, by means of natural heat, transforms itself into our own substance, and becomes one with us...’he who eats of My flesh and drinks of my blood shall remain in me and I in him.’ But there is a difference between other food and this one: whereas the former transforms itself into us and becomes our own substance, the latter transforms us into itself.” (Diotallevi, cited in Cramer, et al, 2011, p. 61).

Food is probably the only communication medium, which we put it in our body. We literally digest its message; a message that influences and changes us physically and mentally.

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Diotallevi

(cited in Cramer, et al, 2011, p. 61)

Expectation vs. Experience

The flavor expectation and flavor experience are two different things. Before trying out a food, a combination of senses creates an idea about the possible taste of that food. That imaginary, expected, taste might not match the real taste. Senses such as vision and smelling are dominant in creating the flavor expectation. It is worth mentioning that smelling happens in two different ways; before eating and during the eating. Therefore, something can smell totally different than what we expect to experience in our mouth. For instance, a smelly cheese might taste better in the mouth than it smells to our nose and this changes the perception of flavor before and after eating it (Spence, Mihalache and Levent, 2018). Wine tasters (and wine enthusiasts in general) use this technique to taste wine. Before trying a wine they smell, check the color

and its physical appearance, then try to imagine and verbalise the expected taste. After tasting, by comparing their expectation and experience, they can review the wine.

In addition to the imaginary expected flavor created by the brain, the brain decides how much it is going to like or dislike the food. Depending on the actual experience, the expectation might be confirmed or disconfirmed. Depending on the level of matching or mismatching, the final experience can be something between satisfaction and disappointment. Mismatching of experience with expectation based on the context might turn to a positive surprise (ibid.).

Studies confirm the importance of sight in culinary experiences. Showing images of appetizing food increases significantly the brain

activity of feeling hunger. Such an effect decreases while the people get full. In this context, researchers have, for example, discovered connections between obesity and mindset. The brain of those who suffer from obesity react stronger to the pictures of high calorie foods. Neuroimaging studies show that price tags, labels and even the name of a chef can influence the perception of flavor. For example, even reading the term of salt can create a similar reaction in the brain as eating something salty (Spence, Mihalache and Levent, 2018).

The experiments carried out by Spence's team show that the color and shape of a plate make the food on them approximately 10% sweeter. Could it be possible, thus, to satisfy people with a sweet tooth with changing the color of the plate without adding extra sugar to the food? Would it be possible to reduce the amount of sugar in a diabetic's or obese person's diet just by changing the shape and color of a plate? (Spence, 2015).

With all these explanations, obviously a big portion of culinary experience is an illusion. Creating a special culinary

experience is not about cooking a flavorful food. Chefs and food designers with this knowledge could create unique culinary experiences beyond mere surprises, which already many chefs do to amuse and entertain the diners. For instance, by manipulating certain aspects of a particular food, you could encourage or discourage someone to eat or avoid that food (ibid.).

Doubtlessly flavor perception is one of the most important multisensory experiences. As the globally well-known chef Blumenthal says, "eating is the only thing we do that involves all the senses. I do not think that we realize just how much influence the senses actually have on the way that we process information from mouth to brain" (Spence, Mihalache and Levent, 2018, p. 67). Prof. Charles Spence, the neurogastronomy scholar from Oxford University invites the researchers to discover the multisensory aspect of flavors. He recommends that the best way to study food would be out of the scientific labs since the results under the brain scanners are not the same as when having dinner in a nice restaurant or with family (ibid.).

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SENSES.”

Heston Blumenthal
(Spence, Mihalache and Levent, 2018, p. 67)

Memory of a Meal

Memory plays an extremely important role in the culinary world. Professor Charles Spence argues that memory is, actually, responsible for the majority of pleasure of having a meal. The experience of actual eating might last for a while but the memory of that meal can last significantly longer (Forrest and De St Maurice, 2021). He quotes David Sutton that “[e]ating can serve as a medium for the act of remembering” (ibid.).

Csikszentmihalyi in his book, *The Meaning of Things*, collected interviews with several people to figure out what is ‘special’ for someone. He found that all those objects that the owners considered as special were those ones, which evoked a special memory, a story or special feeling for them. He concluded that people get attached to the objects because of that feeling, story or memory that they

represent -not because of their physical existence (Norman, 2005).

Memories manifest life experiences. They are important components of every individual’s concept of ‘self’. Memories strengthen the self-image. Self is a complicated phenomenon deeply rooted in the reflective aspect of the mind and heavily influenced by cultural norms. There are significant differences between individualist Western self and collectivist Eastern self. Both of them want to have a good self-image but they do not follow the same cultural standards (norms) (ibid.). These details should be carefully considered in the context of cross-cultural communication to have an effective communication. For instance, pleasant memories of salmiakki in Finnish mind do not necessarily resonate with the pleasant ones in an Iranian mind.

Nearly all of the flavor preferences are the outcome of the previous experiences. Liking certain food can be the result of conditioning because of the awareness of the substance that body would get such as sugar or alcohol. Some food tastes good not because of its taste or chemical substance you would get but because of its association with a pleasant occasion (Forrest and De St Maurice, 2021). The appearance of popular yet humble madeleine cookies never recalled any memory, in Marcel Proust’s mind until that very moment that his mother offered a cup of tea. A spoonful of madeleine crumbs soaked in the tea, all of a sudden, stormed all his senses. As he describes at length in his seven volumes novel, *In Search of Lost Time*, “...this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was me. ...the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind. ...And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray...when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane. ...when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring,

more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest” (Proust, Scott-Moncrieff, Kilmartin and Enright, 1992, pp. 60-64).

The conducted studies confirm that in every occasion the mind tends to remember the beginning, the ending and the highest point of an experience. Chefs and whoever want to create a memorable experience for their audiences are aware of these sequences. Chefs use the element of surprise deliberately, trying to trigger nostalgia and childhood [positive] memories to leave a mark in the diners soul (ibid.).

Memory is the backbone of the culinary world. Skimming the culinary bookshelves in libraries or bookshops proves such an argument. The main portion of culinary books belongs to cookbooks which archive the classic recipes, teach classic techniques and talk about history and traditions. Authors of some of the books have been braver to add their own touch to the original recipes but not any fundamental change. Many cookbooks are about mastering and perfecting the traditional dishes. It is really difficult to find a cookbook about future foods.

Memory is an archive of past experiences. The crucial role of memory in the culinary world explains quite well why the gastronomic

world is very conservative. In fact, the gastronomic conservativeness does not rule only grandma's kitchen. As Antony Bourdain reveals the behind-the-scene of professional cooking in his well-known book "Kitchen Confidential": "...it is not at all about the best recipe, the most innovative presentation, the most creative marriage of ingredients, flavors and texture...the real business of preparing the food you eat—is more about consistency, about mindless, unvarying repetition, the same series of tasks performed over and over and over again in exactly the same way. The last thing a chef wants in a line cook is an innovator, somebody with ideas of his own who is going to mess around with the chef's recipes and presentations. Chefs require blind, near-fanatical loyalty, a strong back

and an automation-like consistency of execution under battlefield condition" (2007, p. 56). Mastery in cooking is replicating your master's dish or your grandma's recipe perfectly, on a 1:1 scale. In a nutshell, innovation and imagination are not welcome.

Certainly, memories should not block the way of progression and innovation but their role in creating culinary experiences cannot be undermined. The role of memory in the construction of self image and identity is undeniable. Sharing food is a chance to "participate in other people's memories" (Mieke Bal, quoted in Shields-Argeles, 2018). Participating in others memories is a chance to see others from their own point of view.

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David Sutton

(Quoted in Forrest and De St Maurice, 2021)

We First Eat with Our Eyes

There is a very popular Iranian stew called fesenjan. It is mainly a combination of walnuts with pomegranate molasses. It has a very fruity and earthy flavor. The taste is a magical balance between sweet, sour, salty and umami. The sauce is served with different kinds of meats and Iranian style rice. It is considered one of the most prestigious Iranian dishes due to the big amount of

pricey walnuts in it. Despite all these mouthwatering features, the dish has a fundamental problem. It looks like excrement! While the Iranian adults overcome its unpleasant visual appearance with time, kids immediately express what they actually see on their plate. Often the Iranians offer this national pride to their non-Iranian friends, who find on their plate what Iranian kids see (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11

Iranian Fesenjoon Stew [Traditional way]

© James Ransom (food52.com, 2020)



Fig. 12

Iranian Fesenjoon Stew, modernised by Vahid Mortezaei

© Alexander Popkov & Vahid Mortezaei (www.vahidmortezaei.com, 2020)

Therefore, as Apicius recognised nearly 2000 years ago, “the first taste is always with the eyes” (Chen, Woods and Spence, 2018, p. 41). Ignoring this simple old fact by Iranian cooks disappoints them when they get a negative reaction about their national pride dish. Appearance of a food and its presentation is, indeed, as important as its flavor and nutritional value. Donald A. Norman believes that attractive things function better.

He backs up his argument with this explanation that the human brain works in three different levels: visceral, behavioral and reflective (Fig. 13). Any of these levels has its own function in human life. Tackling any of them requires special techniques and styles (Norman, 2005). Having knowledge about these three levels of brain processing gives a food designer a great opportunity to stimulate emotions, provoke thoughts and consciously

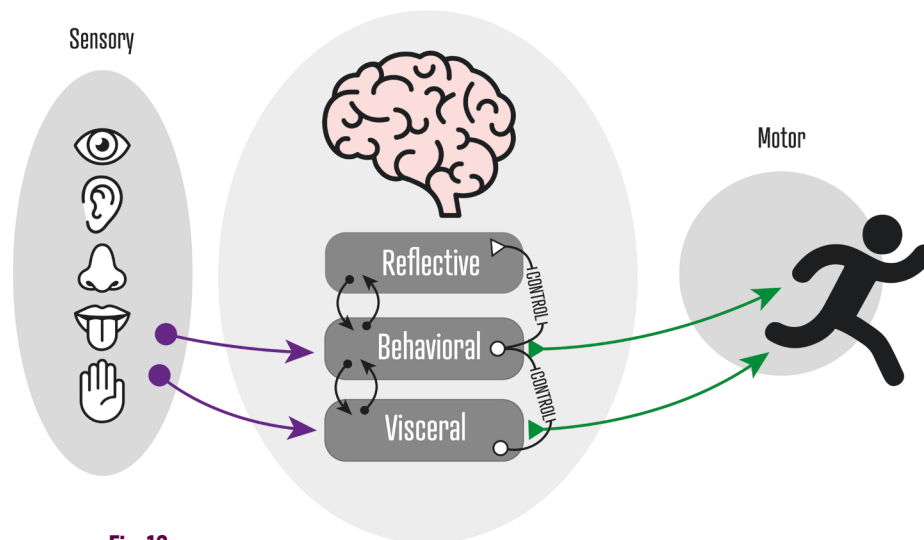


Fig.13
Three levels of processing [reproduced diagram]
(Norman, 2005)

trigger memories.

The visceral level is the automatic and fast one. It analyses the situation immediately, decides and sends signals to the right part of the body to react subconsciously. It warns the brain and in response, the brain double checks visceral decisions before turning them into an action. The visceral level makes decisions with little influence of context or memory. It does not look for reasons or credits and does not mind the consequences. It just reacts (Norman, 2013).

“Visceral design is all about immediate emotional impact” (Norman, 2005, p. 69). The physical appearance,

feelings, sound, smell and shape play key roles while designing for the visceral level of the brain. Nature designs its products according to this level. Human’s brain constantly receives emotional signals from its surroundings, which are interpreted at a visceral level. Coexisting with plants, animals, natural phenomena and other human beings wire the brain to find colorful, sweet, symmetrical fruits attractive. The same evolutionary feature makes another human being attractive to the other and makes fruits sweet and inviting for humans and animals. It is difficult to explain why and how flowers are beautiful, but all the elements of aesthetic value are well embedded in the human brain.

Designers, who target the visceral level of the brain and make pretty and cute stuff, are blamed by their colleagues to be cheap and less intellectual, but among the mass they are more popular. Awareness of the function of visceral level makes chefs put lots of effort on the presentation of their dishes. But great designers and chefs who have high aesthetic sensibility know very well how to simultaneously impress their customers and colleagues (Norman, 2005).

Spence’s research team realised that the shape and color of the container (plate, cup, etc.) influences people’s taste perceptions and expectations. For instance, a very same dessert would

taste 7% sweeter and 13% stronger (flavorwise) on a round shape white plate than the round black one. These kinds of crossmodal influences are described as ‘sensation transference’. This is used to describe how the appearance of a package and container transfers the feelings regarding the content. Visual attributes such as color are associated with particular tastes. For example, pink and red are associated with sweetness while black recalls bitterness (Chen, Woods and Spence, 2018).

The team carried out two experiments to study further influence of the shape and color of plateware on the taste perception of the participants.

Potency	Shape	Sound	Emotional valence	Taste	Color
Weak		Bouda	+	Sweetness	
Strong		Kiki	-	Bitterness Sourness	

Fig.14
“Summary of crossmodal correspondences that has been established to date, including correspondences between shapes and sounds (i.e. the Bouda/Kiki effect), between shapes and potency, between shapes and tastes that are plausibly mediated by emotional valence and finally, between colours and tastes” (Chen, Woods and Spence, 2018, p. 43)
[reproduced diagram]

They studied the Bouba/Kiki effect (Fig. 14). They found out that people associate round-shaped plates with sweeter foods while angular shapes are associated with sour and bitter food. On the other hand, food on angular shape plates supposed to have stronger flavor compared to one on round plates. Those two experiments confirmed that the color and shape of plateware modulate the taste perception. Additionally, they realised that the color contrast between food and plate increased the liking rate of the food (ibid.). These experiments show that a culinary experience is beyond the flavor and appearance of food itself. There are many controllable parameters in the hands of food designers to curate the intended effect.

The behavioral level is not totally conscious. It includes the brain processes, which control daily behavior. The behavioral level is the center of well-learned skills and routine operational behavior. In this level actions happen semi-automatically in that sense that the brain does not control the details of the actions but the desire to do the action. Behavioral level watches over the visceral level's behavior while itself is controlled by the reflective level. Behavioral level does not care about appearance and looks. Design in this level is only about "function, understandability, usability, and physical feel" (Norman, 2005, pp. 69-

70). Designers in this level deal with expectations that correlate to every action. The role of expectations in the emotional aspect of life is undeniable (Norman, 2013). The 'physical feel' should be studied carefully by food designers since they deal with a literally tactile medium such as food to create experiences. The term for physical feel, in the design field is 'tangibility', which good designers take care of carefully (Norman, 2005).

The highest level is the reflective one. This level does not receive inputs through senses and does not have direct control over the behavioral level. This level just observes and reflects on the two others' functions and processes. Human's brain evolutionarily got the capacity to think about its own operations. This level is slow but deep. The reflective level consciously conceptualises and generalises about the surrounding. This level is the source of the deepest emotions since there is a tight relationship between emotions and cognition. This level is the most important one for the designers (Norman, 2013) Design at the reflective level is all about the intellectual properties such as, message, culture, self-image and meaning (Norman, 2005). Most often the reality loses its credibility against reflective memories (Norman, 2013).

These three levels constantly work

together. In different situations, different levels might take initiative, but the reaction comes from their collaboration. A holistic, multisensory and multi-dimensional design should tackle all of them just right. Visceral level is the most simple, but at the same time the most sensitive, to the variety of stimuli. In a well-developed human brain the reflective level does not let the visceral level dictate the whole system to just follow the basic biological needs. Although visceral level warns that bitter tastes should be avoided (probably because they are associated with poison), by

time human beings learn to enjoy several bitter tastes. This is called 'acquired taste' since people had to learn to overpower their biologically programmed nature (ibid.).

The reflective level of my mind got alert when it realised that non-Iranians associate our national pride dish with excrement. It consulted the visceral level and collaborated with the behavioral level to deconstruct and reconstruct the dish in a way that such an association would not happen again (Fig. 12).

Plate Layout (plating)

Arranging the visual elements on a blank page, layout, is what graphic designers deal with a lot. Probably it is one of the most challenging stages of a graphic design project. There are rules, golden ratio, articles, books and grids, but at the end you feel that "there is no recipe for a good layout. What must be maintained is a feeling of change and contract" (Brodovitch, cited in Samara, 2007, p. 196). The same happens when a chef is plating a dish. Blank (usually), white, round plates

are the chef's canvas. They experience very similar challenges as graphic designers with two differences: first of all, they do not have any training in graphic design and secondly, people will anyway eat the food, so nobody can see their bad layout, except for that poor diner. Nowadays the situation has changed. People (and chefs themselves) share the photo of the dish on social media before they eat it. That has become a part of the dining rituals. That is why nowadays even chefs have to think about their portfolio.

Until the late 1960s, chefs did not have such a problem. With the emergence of Nouvelle Cuisine, the chefs put the food on plates before bringing them to the table for the first time. That was the first time that they put themselves in graphic designers' shoes, partially because they got inspired with the Japanese culinary aesthetics and partially because of food media and food photography. Later culinary competitions and earning positive reviews put more pressure on chefs to develop their knowledge about the principles of layout and design (Spence, C., Mihalache, I. and Levent, N., 2018).

Painters, graphic designers and chefs have to overcome the blank page syndrome although they have to slightly deal with different challenges. For example, the majority of plates are round, while many painting canvases and paper pages are rectangular; paintings are hung on walls, while

books and plates lay on the table (the orientation of food/plate in front of a diner is considered carefully in high-end restaurants); choosing color palettes in a kitchen follows slightly different rules since psychologically some colors are associated with particular tastes or substances that might have different effect on the audience. Balance in layout, such as symmetrical/asymmetrical layout, white space and contrast are equally important parameters in plating and garnishing business. When it comes to plating, studies show that diners are sensitive to neatness/messiness on their plate. They consider a neat plate high quality [and maybe higher standards of hygiene], more care and consciously more tasty (ibid.).

All these studies show the importance of design skills and knowledge in a kitchen to enhance the culinary experience of the diners.

Integration & Food

The new arrivals -depending on where they are from; where they have arrived; why they moved; how they came; what is their religion, race, gender, age, and name- have totally different experiences in their new home. The hosts also have different feelings about them, for the same reasons. The unknown is scary, so both sides may feel threatened in such an uncertain situation. The integration of new arrival citizens in the host societies is a major challenge in the multinational societies who receive them. Mutual respect, efficient communication and awareness of the differences are key elements in facilitating the integration processes.

In his essay "A Four-legged Duck? (Chinese Restaurant Culture in the United States from a Cross-cultural/ Intercultural Communication Perspective)" Vincent (Tzu-Wen) Cheng writes about the experience of Chinese Americans who are faced frequently with questions such as "How did you get to speak English so well?" and "Where are you really from?" (Cramer, Greene and Walters, 2011, p. 212). These are very similar questions that I have been asked on several different occasions in Helsinki.

When it comes to new tastes, people

divide into two groups: the 'neophilic' and 'neophobic'. Neophiles welcome new tastes while neophobes are afraid of them (Spence, C., Mihalache, I. and Levent, N., 2018). Would it be possible to politicalize this spectrum and claim that ultra-neophobic is potentially a xenophobic and ultra-neophilic, a potential xenomaniac? Far-right parties and far-left parties? This is just a terrible, narrow-minded and non-scientific generalization but the reality is that these days food too polarises societies. But at the same time the very same food can bring people around the same table and create peace and tolerance between the clashing groups of a society.

Bill Gudykunst assumes that uncertainty and anxiety are the core reasons for the failure of intercultural communication. He warns that unconsidered talks and behavior can raise the already existing tensions in cross-cultural situations. His anxiety/ uncertainty management (AUM) theory concentrates on cultural confrontations between in-groups and outsiders. He presumes that in those situations there is at least one stranger. Unpleasant previous experiences can cause the strangers to feel anxious and insecure. The strangers are not confident about their own behavior.

They are very alert to the cultural differences. They exaggerate the impact of cultural identity on the behavior of people in the host society. Strangers tend to generalise about the major group's behavior (Griffin, 2003). This description might be familiar for those who have experienced such situations (personally I find them very relatable).

Gudykunst sees anxiety as an emotion while he considers uncertainty a thought (a cognitive issue). Uncertainty is the result of failing to foresee the consequence of your confrontation with strangers. Anxiety is worrying about what might happen. From Gudykunst's point of view an effective communication is the process of reducing misunderstandings. He warns that his theory is under construction and, therefore, to avoid the ethnocentric trap would be wise to apply the theory from both standpoints to provide a fair picture of the situation (ibid.).

Studies prove that people cannot think properly while they are anxious. In those situations they focus on problematic aspects of the situation rather than the solutions. In the

opposite way, when they are relaxed and happy they can think better and tend to become more creative and imaginative. Whatever makes people feel good will ease the situation and improve their performance. Attractive things have such a positive impact on people. Aesthetic things create positive emotions and more tolerance toward difficulties (Norman, 2005).

This study argues that food and carefully curated culinary experiences are able to create such an atmosphere. Based on Norman's idea, the aesthetic of food would play an important role in its influence on the diners. Beautiful food encourages and invites people to participate and try it. Knowing the aesthetic values of the audience is very important to serve them something that they all consider attractive. Integrating dishes from different cuisines and creating a third reality that clashing sides would feel belonging to it, would help to integrate the diners around the table in the bigger context of society.

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Farb & Armelagos
(cited in Cramer, et al, 2011, p. 57)

Identity & Food

The brain consumes more energy than any organ in the human body, about 25% of the total energy. One of the brain's most important tasks is finding nutritious food. In the case of human beings, the brain uses all the senses, but mainly vision, to look for food. "The fact that the brain and the mouth are both at the same end of the body may not be as trivial as it seems." (Young, cited in Spence et al., 2015). Food has an existential importance for the brain. On the other hand, the brain is the same organ, which defines our behavior, reflects on its own activities, stores memories and controls emotions. The brain is the one who defines who we are and develops the concept of 'self' and identity. Probably that is why there is such a strong visceral link between identity and food. The emotions and memories have a big influence on that link (Cramer, et al., 2011).

People use food as a means to express their identity to others as well as identify themselves with others. Food, and the traditions around it, carry historical identities, which can be used to communicate about the identity of a community. It functions as a cultural memory. It "is symbolically associated with the most deeply felt human experiences, and thus expresses things that are sometimes difficult to articulate in everyday language" (Farb & Armelagos, cited in Cramer, et al., 2011, p. 57). Food is used as a sign of national and regional identity. Feta cheese for the Greeks, champagne for the French, parmigiano-reggiano for the Italians, and endless other examples are more than just food for people from those geographical locations. The Turkish and the Greeks still argue about whose baklava is the original one. Iran and Turkey are competing to register pomegranate as

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Susan J. Kalčík
(Quoted in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 61)

their own national fruit.

Thus, food in different contexts works as an identity marker. Food can indicate the income level, wealth and social class of people. For instance, caviar is a symbol of the most luxurious and expensive food. Eating caviar sends a clear message about the diner's status. If someone eats caviar but does not know how to handle it or which drink should be drunk with it, it will send a totally different kind of message. Equally, in social terms, food indicates different aspects of identity such as religion, gender, age, political preferences, etc. (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

Food exhibits relationships between individuals and groups. "Social relationships are developed and maintained by symbols and, thus, we tend to see groups through their symbols and to identify ourselves through symbols" (Kalčík, quoted in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 90). Eating a particular food can indicate group affiliation while eating the other group's food can be considered as a

sign of accepting them. For example, a majority group eating food of an ethnical minority group sends a message of acceptance in the wider majority group. "By ingesting the foods of each new group, we symbolize the acceptance of each group and its culture" (ibid., p. 61).

In the Iranian culture having someone's salt and bread is a sign of loyalty to that person. Nobody literally offers salt and bread to each other, but the concept strongly remains in the daily life of Iranians. The intrapersonal and interpersonal function of food connects people psychologically, physically, socially and symbolically to each other. It would be enough to remind someone that you already had his/her salt and bread to bring peace of mind that you are trustable. This study is an initiative to discover the 'salt and bread' of different cultures and translate them into an international nonverbal language, which goes beyond linguistic and cultural barriers.

Time & Food

Is it possible to communicate an abstract concept such as time by means of food?

The transitory nature of food is one of its fundamental characteristics. Food on a photo frame is captured, stopped and stored forever, but food itself is not a static artifact. The moment that food is ready, its spoiling process has started. Food grows from the ground, gets mature and gradually goes back to the ground. It would be called food if someone eats it between those two moments. Food is dynamic. Time shapes and reshapes food. Time is an inseparable element of food. If the element of time is extracted from food, it will turn into a still-life photo.

A piece of fresh meat at room temperature will change its message.

The message might get old and out of date or transform to something new: rotten meat or aged meat. However, time does not necessarily always have a negative impact on food. Cooking is a time consuming process; fruits need time to ripen and cheese and wine get mature by time. Even freezing food just slows down the process of spoiling, but it does not stop it. There are other culinary techniques which manipulate the effect of time on food, such as pickling, drying, saturating in sugar or salt, fermenting etc.

Time is controlled in every kitchen. Time is part of the food during the preparation process, serving, consumption and storage. Freshness, temperature, mold, steam, crunchiness of herbs and so on are all indicators of time in food. Flavour can indicate time

too; such is the case of, for example, sour milk. Sound can indicate time in food; ripen watermelon sounds more bass compared to unripe one. Obviously food is a four dimensional phenomena. All those are possibilities in the hands of chefs and food designers to communicate time by food.

These examples about the influence of time on food remind of the culinary triangle of Claude Lévi-Strauss (Fig. 15). He approached cuisine (as part of a culture) as he did with a language to identify a binary system of the opposite terms and concepts. He believed that those binary sets would provide details about the social structure of different cultures. He draws the culinary triangle based on the culinary methods and practices, which are employed to prepare food to argue that they express the mental structure of human beings (Shields-Argeles, et al., 2018). The

presence of the concept of time in the triangle is obvious although it has not been mentioned. Time is one of the elements that cause the contrast between each couple of the corners of the triangle. Temperature or bacterias need a certain amount of time to transform a raw material to cooked or rotten one.

It is possible to communicate dates and seasons too by food. Festive foods in their cultural context indicate a particular time of the year. For instance, *mämmi* is a sign of Easter in the Finnish context, while its Iranian cousin, *samanu*, indicates the beginning of the Iranian new year. Both also remind people of the beginning of Spring. Food can point out a historical occasion too. Therefore, there are endless opportunities in food for communicating a complex and abstract idea such as time.

Summary

In this chapter the perception that tongue is the main organ for experiencing food is questioned. Reviewing the studies carried-out in Oxford University shows that other elements, such as color and shape of a container, influence the taste

of food. The mind plays a crucial role in creating culinary experiences. Unexpectedly, even sound takes part in shaping a taste. The visual aspect of food and the art of plating are also explored further in order to discover the importance of visual

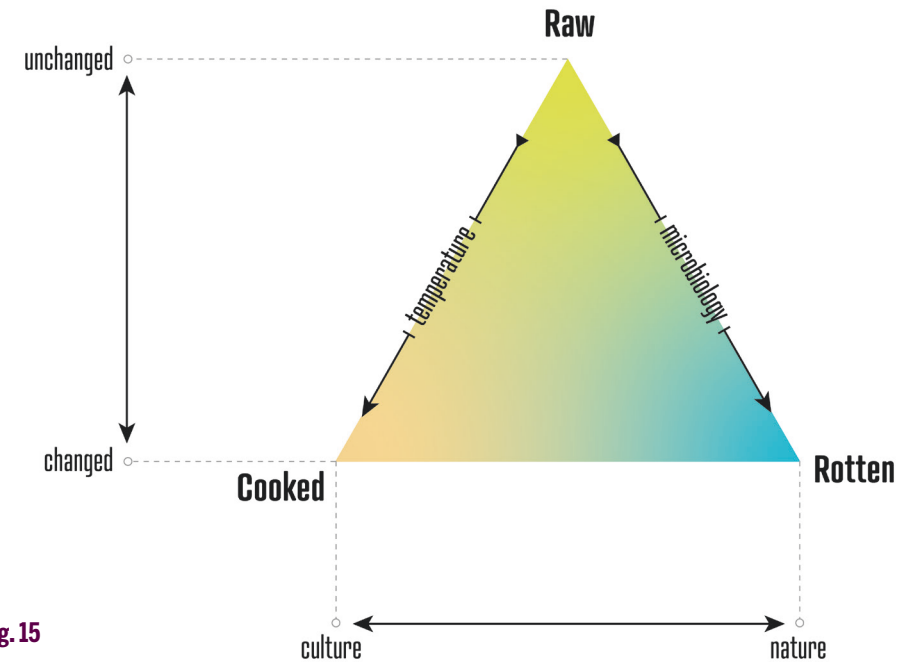


Fig. 15
the culinary triangle
of Claude Lévi-Strauss
[reproduced diagram]
(www.researchgate.net,
2020)

communication skills in the world of culinary arts.

Memories are the backbone of a person's culinary preferences. The relation of food with identity and

time are discussed further in order to find out how food connects individuals to each other, to their geographical location and deals with the sense of time.

8

MODERNISING THE CUISINE

Modernising the Cuisine

Talking about food without involving chefs in the discussion would be totally incomplete. That is why this chapter focuses on chefs' role in the developments of the culinary world. Radical changes or revolutions are not common in the field of gastronomy. Although some calls for change were heard in the beginning of the 20th century, it took decades until the revolution actually took place at the end of the century. This chapter summarizes the revolution from its beginning till now, when chefs and designers share common interests and try to discover the potential of food, beyond its nutritional value.

Futuristic Food

The foundation for the future is the present imagination. Obviously in a conservative field of cooking where imagination is not really appreciated, the future might look quite similar to the past. For that reason, “The Futurist CookBook” of the founder of Futurism, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, attracts attention. He believes that “men think, dream, and act according to what they eat and drink” (2014). Accordingly, for having agile men who fit in the fast future, there should be new diets: “we Futurists have injected agility into world literature with words-in-liberty and simultaneity... now we will establish the way of eating best suited to an ever more high speed and, airborne in life” (ibid.). The Italian frustrated man urges a culinary renewal in the 1930s and, ironically, one of the first lines of his culinary manifesto is to abolish pasta from the Italian cuisine; a direct attack to the

temple of Italian gastronomic religion. He protests the huge size of portions too. The book and its recipes may sound like a kind of joke but, at the same time, they are certainly thought-provoking. He invites experts, such as chemists, to take urgent action and create nutritional powders and pills, subsidized by the state (ibid.). Probably those are the pills that later on Bruno Martino was singing about, which could replace the spaghetti with ragu in the year 2000 (mentioned above). It goes without saying that neither of them had a chance to enjoy the micro-oven ready-meals to see that you should not necessarily need to take pills to synchronise yourself with the pace of modern lifestyle in the year 2020.

Marinetti’s cookbook is very important because it is rare in its kind. It is a call for change and illustrates culinary

“MEN THINK,
DREAM, AND ACT
ACCORDING TO
WHAT THEY EAT
AND DRINK.”

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti



Fig. 16

Duplication of The Fasces based on Marinetti's cookbook

© Stefano Santangelo (www.vice.com, 2020)



Fig. 17

Duplication of The Excited Pig based on Marinetti's cookbook

© Stefano Santangelo (www.vice.com, 2020)

frustration and anxiety. The recipes in the cookbook might not sound appealing at all taste-wise, but they definitely encourage the readers to think out of the box (Fig 16 & 17). He considers all the aspects of dining to create an original (not necessarily pleasant) experience for the diners, in which all the details are in harmony with the food's flavour and color (ibid.). The journey from

Marinetti's exaggerated, artistic, and weird banquets to Massimo Bottura, who is considered "the avant-garde master of Italian gastronomy" that reinvented their national cuisine (Finedininglovers.com, 2020)(Fig. 18-20), shows a gradual development of a new approach to food within the last century. Obviously, both of them have considered food as an expressive cultural phenomena beyond nutrition.



Fig. 18

"Oops! I dropped the lemon tart" dessert, Osteria Francescana Restaurant, Massimo Bottura

(www.sothebys.com, 2020)



Fig. 19

"Caesar salad in bloom", Osteria Francescana Restaurant, Massimo Bottura

© Paolo Terzi (www.finedininglovers.com, 2020)



Fig. 20

"Fish soup", Osteria Francescana Restaurant, Massimo Bottura

© Paolo Terzi (www.finedininglovers.com, 2020)

“WE NEED TO
APPROACH THE
PAST NOT WITH
NOSTALGIA, BUT
WITH A CRITICAL
EYE.”

Massimo Bottura
(madfeed.co, 2020)

Modernisation in Gastronomy

In the gastronomy world revolutions are not common. Cuisines are the outcome of gradual evolution. However, within the last three decades the culinary world has experienced a true revolution. A few rebellious chefs have not been satisfied with their main role for feeding their diners. They believed that food is beyond fuel and the diners' stomach is not the main audience. They believed in the power of food to stimulate emotions, tackle memories and provoke thoughts to create a unique experience for the diners. While some were discovering the artistic aspects of food, few others were more interested in the science behind cooking and believed that cooking is a scientific activity. The outcome of the questioning, research and experiments is the modernist cuisine, which is worth studying carefully. The story of modernist cuisine is very similar

to what happened in the design field; the movement that elevated design from craftsmanship to a research oriented science. Probably it is not a coincidence that these changes are happening simultaneously in the two independent fields. The emergence of the food design discipline could be considered as a reason why the culinary and design world got this close to each other.

As mentioned before, "there is a large and vocal school of thought in the world of food and gastronomy that celebrates tradition. People who advocate this point of view seek out the authentic and original aspects of cuisine" (Myhrvold, N., et al., 2011, p. 14). The cuisines somehow have a similar story to arts. The employers of professional chefs were wealthy people, who had political or religious power. Those chefs, with

their wealthy sponsors, developed sophisticated haute-cuisine. That is why the countries with long and stable aristocratic history have more elaborate cuisines. The French cuisine is a well-known example of this. Parallel to that peasants, who had to feed themselves, developed their own cuisines, which are equally important. For understanding the latest modernisation in the culinary world, Impressionism would be the most relevant artistic movement to compare it with (Myhrvold, N., et al., 2011).

In the early 20th century, Auguste Escoffier catalogued French haute-

cuisine's recipes and techniques. His path was dominant for a few decades after him. In the 60s few French chefs founded the Nouvelle cuisine which prepared the foundation of revolution. In the middle of 1980s the first signs of culinary revolution appeared. The raising changes in techniques, aesthetics and gastronomical philosophy were not anymore the polished version of old traditions. The rebellious chefs were challenging, questioning and breaking established rules (ibid.).

“Creativity means not copying”

In 1984, Ferran Adrià (without any formal training) started to work in elBulli restaurant's kitchen (ibid.). A sentence in a culinary lecture by Jacques Maximin was a turning point for Ferran: “Creativity means not copying”. He explains the impact

of the sentence like this: “we were convinced that we needed to use major cookery books less and less and try to find an identity of our own. This was the start of our plunge into creativity in elBulli” (Elbulli.com, 2020).

Replacing duplication with creativity



Fig. 21

“Seeds” dish from elBulli's menu 2006

© Francesc Guillamet & Phaidon Press (slate.com, 2020)

in elBulli was the beginning of the revolution which turned the culinary world upside down. Obviously, Ferran was not alone. Others in the field were simultaneously getting ready for the revolution. In 1984, Harold McGee's

groundbreaking book, “On Food and Cooking”, which is about the scientific explanations of culinary beliefs, influenced many, including Heston Blumenthal, who admits the book literally changed his life. Blumenthal's



Fig. 22

Plasticine mock-up for “Seeds” dish

© Francesc Guillamet & Phaidon Press (slate.com, 2020)

contribution to the development of Molecular Gastronomy is undeniable. Similar to Adrià, Blumenthal did not have formal training in culinary business. Passion and dedication were his drivers to become part of history (Myhrvold, et al., 2011).

Blumenthal is very passionate about the science of cooking and sensory science. He collaborates with scientists [e.g. Charles Spence] to create multi-sensory experiences. He believes

that for having a holistic dining experience, which would stimulate all the senses and touch the soul of a diner, everything should be in harmony well beyond the decoration and background music (ibid.). Chefs like him truly claim that gastronomy is a scientific discipline. Books such as “Modernist Cuisine” prove such a claim. This movement in the culinary world is very similar to the movement in design, causing the emergence of design research.



Fig. 23 [above] The olive spheres, elBulli
(www.ashkeling.com, 2020)

Fig. 24 [below] Rice & parmesan cookie, elBulli
(www.ashkeling.com, 2020)



Fig. 25 [above] The Moon, elBulli
(www.ashkeling.com, 2020)

Fig. 26 [below] Spicy tomato cake, elBulli
(www.ashkeling.com, 2020)



Copyright in Culinary World

It would be helpful to discuss a bit about copyright ownership in the culinary world to understand the impact of that sentence, which moved Ferra Adrià dramatically. Culinary business and the design sector have a major similarity, which would help to understand the connection between them. Traditionally the main focus of both disciplines has been producing 'stuff'. The origin of both of them goes back to craftsmanship practices. Apprenticeship has played an important role in both disciplines. Learning techniques from the masters and mastering them by repeating has been the normal path in the design and culinary world.

Ahead of the culinary field, design transformed from a craftsmanship profession to a scientific high-end discipline. Although still copying others' designs is a big issue, there are

legal means to protect the authorship. In the conservative world of cooking, in turn, copying has been an accepted and normal practice, but it is about to change. There have been a few cases in which chefs have claimed that their work has been copied, but still the legal framework for protecting copyright in gastronomy is unclear (Myhrvold, et al., 2011). Picasso's words "good artists copy, great artists steal" will, perhaps, always be applicable to both sectors. There are a few chefs, like Ferran Adria, who push the boundaries of the gastronomy world and some who get inspired with that work, but there are many who just copy the creations of the two former groups.

“GOOD ARTISTS
COPY, GREAT
ARTISTS STEAL.”

Pablo Picasso

Dining as a Dialogue

“...Adrià developed perhaps his most important piece of culinary philosophy: the idea that dining is a dialogue between the chef and the diner. In haute cuisine up to that point, the vocabulary of that dialogue was constrained by tradition and convention. Diners come to a meal with a tacit understanding of what is possible and familiar, based on their previous dining experiences. The chef, at least in traditional cuisine, comes prepared to cater to diners’ perceptions. Adrià broke those constraints by creating novel foods that could not help but provoke a reaction, forcing diners to reassess their assumptions” (Myhrvold et al., 2011, p. 37).

For Adrià it was not enough to focus only on the deliciousness of food. Before him chefs’ main focus was discovering unique flavor and texture

combinations. During history, many chefs have involved the element of surprise in their dishes. However, Adrià was not satisfied with those boundaries and had a very intellectual approach to food. He was wondering how he can make people think or react emotionally through food. He tried to go beyond the visceral level to challenge his diners intellectually. He calls his style, ‘techno-emotional’ cuisine, which reveals his approach to gastronomy. In contrast to the old-school serious chefs’ manner, in elBulli, humor, jokes, and making diners laugh through food was the core of the culinary experience (Myhrvold et al., 2011).

Probably one of the most important parts of elBulli’s story was founding its R&D kitchen, elBulli Taller in 2000. Taller was a full-time independent workshop dedicated to

experimenting and developing new concepts and ideas. The chefs working in the Taller were given free hand to literally play with ingredients, utensils and techniques. The only request was to document whatever they do regardless of the final results. Taller was constantly feeding elBulli with creative ideas and innovations. All those documentations were published annually in the form of elBulli’s book to share the new findings with the rest of the gastronomy world [such a generosity in the competitive and conservative world of culinary, which some chefs would keep their own recipes as secrets for decades, is a new tradition introduced by Ferran Adrià] (Andrews, 2010).

Ferran summarizes the core of his cuisine in elBulli: “Technical and conceptual research, the role of the

senses in creating and eating, and the sixth sense, i.g., the role of reason and reflection on the act of eating” (ibid., p. 162) Despite his generosity in sharing the secrets with his competitors, he never liked to share the techniques and ingredients with his customers since he wanted them to experience his creations totally on a visceral and emotional level, “you don’t want a magician to reveal what’s behind his tricks” he explained (ibid., p. 158).

In the last series of their books, elBulli Evolutionary Analysis 2005-11, they summarized their philosophy of cooking in 23 entries. The first one is “Cooking is a language that can express harmony, creativity, happiness, beauty, poetry, complexity, magic, humour, provocation and culture” (Adrià, Soler and Adrià, 2014, p. 87). The list continues:

- “Cooking techniques, both classical and modern, are a legacy that the chef has to know how to use to its full advantage.
- As has occurred in most fields of human evolution down the ages, new technologies are a resource for the progress of cooking. The information transmitted by a dish is enjoyed through the senses; it is also enjoyed and interpreted through reflection.
- Taste is not the only sense that can be stimulated; touch can also be played with (such as contrasts of temperatures and textures), as well as smell and sight (such as colours, shapes, optical illusions), whereby the five senses become one of the main points of reference in the creative

cooking process.

- The technique-concept search is the apex of the creative pyramid.
- Creation involves teamwork. In addition, research has become consolidated as a new feature of the culinary creative process.
- The barriers between the sweet and savoury world are being broken down [...]
- The classical structure of dishes is being broken down [...]
- Regional cuisine as a style is an expression of its own geographical and cultural context as well as its culinary traditions [...]
- There are two main paths towards attaining harmony of products and flavours: through memory (connection with regional cooking traditions, reworking, deconstruction, former modern recipes), or through new combinations.
- A culinary language is being created that is becoming more and more ordered, and on some occasions it establishes a relationship with the world and language of art.
- Decontextualisation, irony, spectacle and performance are completely legitimate, as long as they are not superficial but respond to, or are closely bound up with, a process of gastronomic reflection.
- Knowledge and/or collaboration with experts from different fields (gastronomic culture, history, industrial design, and so on) is essential for progress in cooking. In particular, collaboration with the food industry and the scientific world has brought about fundamental advances. Sharing this knowledge among cooking professionals has contributed to this evolution” (ibid.).

This summary gives an idea about Ferran and his team’s revolutionary approach toward food and dining that shifted the paradigm of the gastron-

omy world. Nowadays several high-end restaurants around the world have their own R&D kitchens and you can hear Ferran’s words from the

other chefs’ mouths. In fact, many of the current creative chefs have spent some time of their professional lives in elBulli. Thanks to Ferran’s belief in sharing the knowledge with other professionals, nowadays elBulli’s influence and dishes can be found in many ordi-

nary and mid-range restaurants around the world. Ferran and his follower’s influence on the culinary world is so vast and deep that it makes it difficult to recognize how haute-cuisine looked like before.



Fig. 27

Iranian Caviar made out of melon and passion fruit, elBulli menu (www.finedininglovers.com, 2020)

Deconstruction

Ferran’s critical approach to traditions (which, as mentioned above, are the foundation of the gastronomy world) led him to the idea of ‘deconstruction’. He describes this method in elBulli 1994-1997 book: “It consists of taking a gastronomic reference that is already known, embodied in a dish, and transforming all or some of its ingredients by modifying its texture, shape, and/or temperature. This deconstructed

dish will keep its sense and will still be linked to a culinary tradition, but its appearance will be radically different to the original. For this game to be successful it is essential that the diner has gastronomic memory, since the absence of references turns the concept of deconstruction into mere ‘construction’ based on nothing...The result has a direct relationship with the diner’s memory, in that although he may not see that he has been served

a familiar dish, he later establishes a direct connection between the flavor of what is eating and the classic recipe; in other words he recognizes it” (Myhrvold et al., 2011, p.37).

Heston Blumenthal borrowed the concept of deconstruction to his kitchen but in a totally different way. He took an opposite approach to the traditions in contrast to Ferran’s style. Blumenthal kept the traditional physical appearance of dishes but fundamentally changed their consistency and substances. Ferran’s dishes looked unfamiliar but tasted familiar. Blumenthal’s dishes looked familiar but tasted unfamiliar. These two approaches have had totally different impacts on the diners. Blumenthal is very interested in memories and nostalgia. He tries to tackle the childhood memories

to evoke emotions (Myhrvold et al., 2011).

The two approaches target two totally different types of audiences. Ferran talks to the people, who are tired of traditions and look for novelties and new experiences. Those people are not digging history to find their childhood memories. They are futurist and adventurous individuals. But Ferran knows very well the importance of memory in human psychology and that is why he plays a psychological game with his diners. Ferran’s dishes connect the future to the past. They create the feeling of home in an unknown, newly discovered, continent. These dishes are talking to those, who are tired of explorations and are looking for home. On the other hand, Blumenthal talks to a range of conservative audiences who



Fig. 28
Meatfruit, Blumenthal
(www.eater.com, 2020)



Fig. 29 Sound of the sea dish, The Fat Duck Restaurant Blumenthal
(www.trendbible.com, 2020)

have a deep attachment to the past. They try to conserve the traditions and miss the wonderful old times. They look for familiar antique artifacts, no matter how dusty and broken they may be. Blumenthal’s familiar-looking dishes, all-of-a-sudden, shoot his diners from the past to the future. In the blink of an eye, they realise that there might be a future apart from the past. Both creative chefs put their diners in a time machine. Ferran drives

the machine on the reverse gear while Blumenthal drives forward. It is yet to be discovered whether there is any relationship between these two creative chefs’ approaches with their British and Spanish nationalities?

Following these fundamental changes, gradually the principles of Modernist Cuisine take shape although this is just a beginning of the change and the path ahead is unclear:

- “Cuisine is a creative art in which the chef and diner are in dialogue. Food is the primary medium for this dialogue, but all sensory aspects of the dining experience contribute to it.

- Diners have expectations—some explicit, some implicit—of what sort of food is possible. Surprising them with food that defines their expectations is another way to engage them intellectually. This includes putting familiar flavors in unfamiliar forms or the converse.
- In addition to surprise, many other emotions, reactions, feelings, and thoughts can be elicited by cuisine. These include humor, whimsy, satire, and nostalgia, among others. The repertoire of the Modernist chef isn't just flavor and texture; it is also the range of emotional and intellectual reactions that food can inspire in the diner" (Myhrvold et al., 2011, p. 56).

The explained radical transformation in the gastronomy business is a clear sign of the shift in the sector from feeding to providing experiences. A movement from the tangible world of materials to the metaphysical world of experiences. It looks like such a transformation is in correlation

with changes in the design world as described "...a practice that is being challenged and is changing, as it seeks to discover and make people experience something that does not yet quite exist, in increasingly complex contexts of use" (Binder, Thomas, et al., 2011).

Summary

Marinetti's Futurist Banquets might not sound appetizing, but, for sure, they can be seen as a call for a culinary revolution. The developments in the world of gastronomy, got to its summit by the end of the 20th century by raising a group of chefs who turned the haute cuisine upside down. Ferran Adrià, who has his name registered in culinary history, decided to put all the traditions aside and become truly creative. His revolutionary approach

to food converted the kitchen to a creative design workshop where chefs can freely brainstorm, prototype and develop groundbreaking culinary experiences. Food became a medium for expression, performance and dialogue for them. Such an approach took chefs out of their kitchens and, simultaneously, brought experts from the other fields to the kitchen to deal with food as a multidisciplinary phenomenon.

“CUISINE IS A
CREATIVE ART IN
WHICH THE CHEF
AND DINER ARE IN
DIALOGUE. FOOD
IS THE PRIMARY
MEDIUM FOR THIS
DIALOGUE.”

(Myhrvold et al., 2011, p. 56)

9

THE CASE STUDIES

The Case Studies

In this chapter two case studies will be discussed. The first one is a series of workshops, which took place in several locations in Helsinki, in collaboration with Suomen Setlementtiliitto. The second case is a set of three individual projects under the Persikka concept. The case studies have been chosen in order to show the development of the skills and knowledge of the designer about the thesis' topic.

Food in Action

It took six years to finalise this thesis -way beyond a regular Master Thesis. Within these years, the thesis stepped out of the borders of the academic world and continued as a small startup, which evolved, developed and prototyped the theoretical framework in its real life context, with ordinary people. Tens of case studies were carried out, which could be included here. Several creative catering events, food design workshops, performances and presentations were carried out to explore, explain and examine the communicational aspects of food and the theoretical framework for food design introduced in this thesis, under the commercial title of Vahid Mortezaei Studio (www.vahidmortezaei.com). Nearly all the projects were documented in photographs and communicated to the broader audience via blogging, social media and mass media (such as

newspapers). The clients' and diners' opinions were actively collected and used to improve the prototypes.

Design skills were combined with sophisticated culinary techniques to create unheard and unseen products. For example, applying color theory makes a significant difference in a kitchen. A visual designer knows very well how to match and mix colors -information, which chefs, who base their knowledge on gastronomy, do not necessarily know. On the other hand, chefs are aware of the culinary methods to extract and enhance the natural colors of the ingredients. Combining those skills together gives a powerful tool in the hands of a food designer to have an impact on the audience, made of diners. Using all those hybrid skills can, for instance, break the border between the natural and the artificial. This, in turn, can

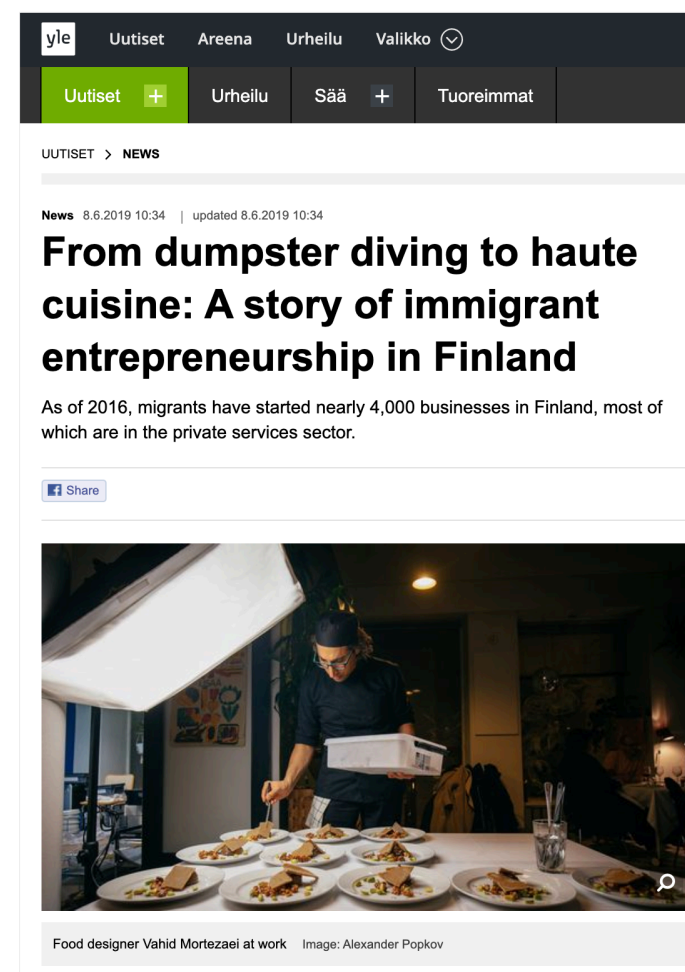


Fig. 30

Screenshot of the news
(yle.fi/uutiset/, 2020)

create suspension of disbelief for the diners: a state that can make them wonder what is edible and what is not. Such moments are included in the case studies presented below - for example, within the Seven S's performance. In this particular food design prototype edible roses were mixed with decorative natural plants on the table. These types of illusionary experiences can encourage the participants to question their well-established

perceptions about timeworn objects like apples and roses (Fig. 31).

For showing the evolution of the studies during such a long time and the professional transformation of the researcher from a foodie graphic designer to a full-time food designer, two cases were chosen to be discussed further. The first case is the very first series of workshops, which were organised exclusively for the thesis.



Fig. 31

Rose made out of apple, Persikka performance
© Vahid Mortezaei

The original research plan included the idea of gathering data through workshops, strengthening them with a literature review and publishing the results as a blog or a website. The second case is a package of three individual projects which were carried out recently under one main concept, Persikka. Nearly six years passed between the two cases presented in this thesis. Comparing the processes and outcomes of them illustrates how the concept of food design, presented above through a theoretical lense, developed.

The first case is a traditional approach to food as an “excuse” for gathering people to socialise. The workshops

demonstrated the power of food as a tool for creating social cohesion but the question of how food can function as a communication medium remained unanswered. Although the original aim was to use food as a means of storytelling, at the end it remained just as a reason to tell stories. Food in those workshops had a passive role in the process. In McLuhan’s terms, it performed as “a cool medium of low definition” (McLuhan, 2001, pp. 24-25). Very little information was transmitted by food and the rest was left to the audience, who had to fill the gaps. In contrast, the second case shows a conscious process of using food as an active communication medium and storytelling tool. In

these two food design prototypes food was carefully designed and curated to transmit the intended messages to the audience. In the second case food proved to be an intense medium,

which delivered sufficient amounts of data to the audience. Only minimum communicational gaps were left to the audience to be filled, and these could be solved with just a few questions.

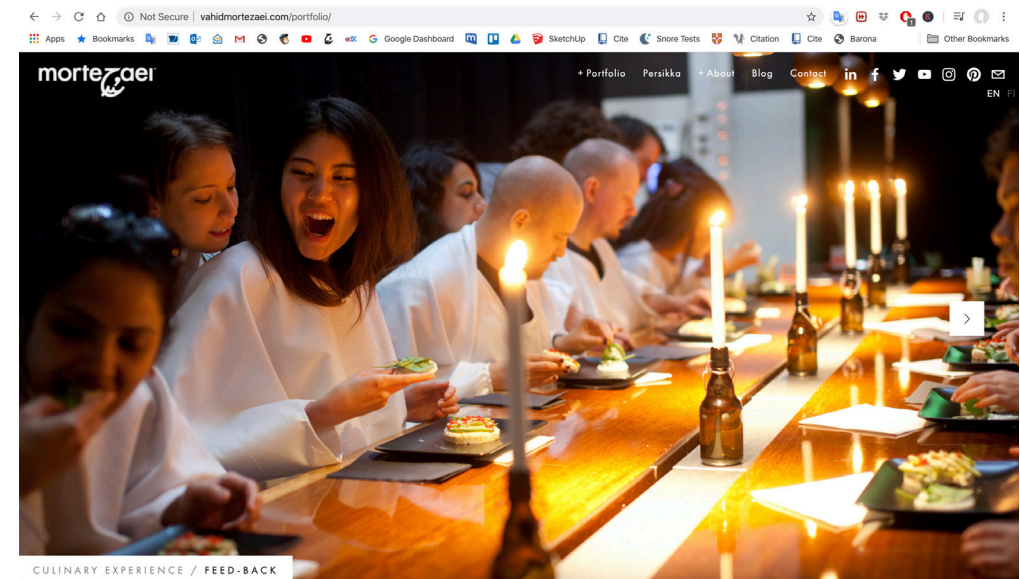


Fig. 32 [above] screenshot of www.vahidmortezaei.com
© Jenni Holma [the original photo]

Fig. 33 [below] article about Vahid Mortezaei’s work
(www.hs.fi/ruoka/, 2020)



Culinary Cross-Cultural Communication

Setlementtiasunnot (Examining Food as a Cross-Cultural Communication Medium)

For examining the power of food as a cross-cultural communication medium and to put the theoretical framework to test in practice, I decided to organize a series of co-design workshops. Finding the right participants and partners who could help me to make the workshops happen was not easy. Finally, I received a positive response from Suomen Setlementtiliitto ry. The Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses introduce its mission as “we support both new Finns as they integrate, and native Finns as they adjust to life in multicultural Finland. For people in difficult life situations we offer crisis support, substance abuse rehabilitation, debt counselling, mediating and victims support services. Based on local needs, we conduct operations jointly with volunteer workers and professionals, with and among

people, in Finland and around the world” (Suomen Setlementtiliitto, 2020). Setlementtiliitto provided the venues, helped me to find and invite the participants, co-facilitate the workshops and to cover the cost of the ingredients.

Setlementtiasunnot Oy owns several residential buildings around Helsinki. The residents of the buildings were exactly the kind of people that I was looking for: outcasts. With the help of Matti Cantell, the multiculturalism and equality expert of the organisation, we successfully carried out three workshops and a few pre-workshop sessions in their premises in different neighbourhoods around Helsinki with a total number of participants about 30.

The plan for the workshops was as follows:

- Finding participants from different social and cultural backgrounds
- Asking the participants to bring a recipe of their own childhood or any recipe that they had a special memory with it
- Collecting the recipes
- Organising pre-workshop sessions with the participants, to share the recipes and the related stories, discuss and choose few of them to cook together in the workshop
- In the day of the workshop: gathering together in the kitchen, cooking together and later eating together and socialising
- Conducting verbal conversations among the participants
- Documenting the sessions by taking photos

Pohjois-Haaga

27.01.2015 | The very first session which was a pre-pre-workshop that took place in Pohjois-Haagan Setlementiasunnott. I was going to share my idea of the workshop and ask the potential participants to bring their own recipes. However, some people were so excited to start the workshops that they already arrived at that session with their recipe books accompanied with the memories (Fig. 34).



Fig. 34

Some of them told me that they could not participate in the cooking session but they wanted to contribute with their own recipes. At the end of the meeting we decided to put a box to collect more recipes until the next meeting.



Fig. 35

14.02.2015 | We gathered once again to discuss the recipes, share stories and decide what we are going to cook and when. Around 20 people participated in the session. After an intense debate and discussion we chose a few of the recipes to cook (Fig. 35 & 36).



Fig. 36

28.02.2015 | Me and Matti did the shopping and went early Sunday morning to wait for the participants and prepare the kitchen. Surprisingly I saw that one of the participants had already started to cook her own recipe since she had to go to church but did not want to miss the opportunity to share her food with others. Later people gathered in the kitchen. The age range of participants was between 2 to 75 years old. There were people from Jordan, Palestine, Italy, Finland, Philippines and Iraq. We divided the tasks and started to cook. The most memorable moment in that session was when we were cooking meatballs. There were two pans of meatballs next to each other on the stove top. One pan was halal meatballs and the other one usual ones. Around those two kind of meatballs, the muslim and non-muslim participants were discussing about halal food. The non-muslim people were wondering what is the difference since the meatballs on the both pans looked the same (Fig. 37). Religion is a very sensitive topic to discuss and easily could go in the wrong direction. But obviously meatballs managed to create a common ground for such a discussion.



Fig. 37

Another common conversation in the workshops was about the ingredients. It happened many times that somebody got surprised by how the other one used a particular ingredient. You could hear once a while saying that we never



Fig. 38

put this one in that one or we do not eat this on with that. The other one was questioning why; we always do it this way. Cooking together helped to realise the fact that there is not just one reality in the world, one lifestyle, one way



Fig. 39

of cooking or one way of whatever. There is always a different way of doing something or using some ingredients.



Fig. 40

When service time approached the family members of some of the participants joined us. Eating together was as usual very pleasant. Obviously people were happy with the session and its outcome. The food on their plate was an outcome



Fig. 40

of their intellectual and physical collaboration. They peeled, washed, chopped and mixed their beliefs, memories and emotions; put them all together in one pot to cook to become as one whole; then they shared that mixture. The final product did not belong to one person. In fact, it was a property of the community. Later more residents of the building came to take food. I realised that during the workshops I should just become one of the participants to cook, make conversations and observe the dynamic of the kitchen otherwise I would interrupt the organic flow of ideas and emotions.



Fig. 41

Pasila

27.05.2015 | We organised the second workshop at Rauhanasema (Peace Station) in Pasila. The problem was that nobody registered as participants and I was insisting to have a new group of people for the workshop. Finally by Matti's suggestion I went to Maailma kylässä (The World Village Festival) to find a few participants for the upcoming workshop. I hung the poster on my back and walked around while shouting for participants. It was quite successful since few people registered. Because we had very few participants, they just sent me the recipes by email and we decided to cook all of them.



Fig. 42

This time we had Nepalese, Finnish-American and Finnish participants. The dynamic of the workshop was different since the number of participants was small and they were younger. We cooked and discussed together and, surprisingly, when the dinner was ready, we received some extra guests. People

from Faiths Without Borders Association (Uskot ilman rajoja ry) joined us to share the meal. The guests were from different ages, races and religions (Fig. 45). Later the report of the workshop was published on Kirkko ja Kaupunki website. (Fig. 43).



Fig. 43

The reason that we had difficulty to find enough participants was that I did not want to invite people from my own network, which back then was limited to international friends from the university who had very similar educational backgrounds and could communicate at least in English properly. I wanted to have people who hopefully did not know each other before. As I mentioned

before, as it was planned, every workshop should have a new group of participants. Therefore the challenge for finding the right type of participants was serious.



Fig. 44



Fig. 45

Malmi

29.8.2015 | We organised the last workshop at Malmin Setlementtiasunnot. This time we had again a pre-workshop session to meet the people and decide about the recipes. That residential building had a totally different atmosphere. They had a very well designed big kitchen with its garden in the backyard where the community grew their own herbs and vegetables there (Fig. 48). The

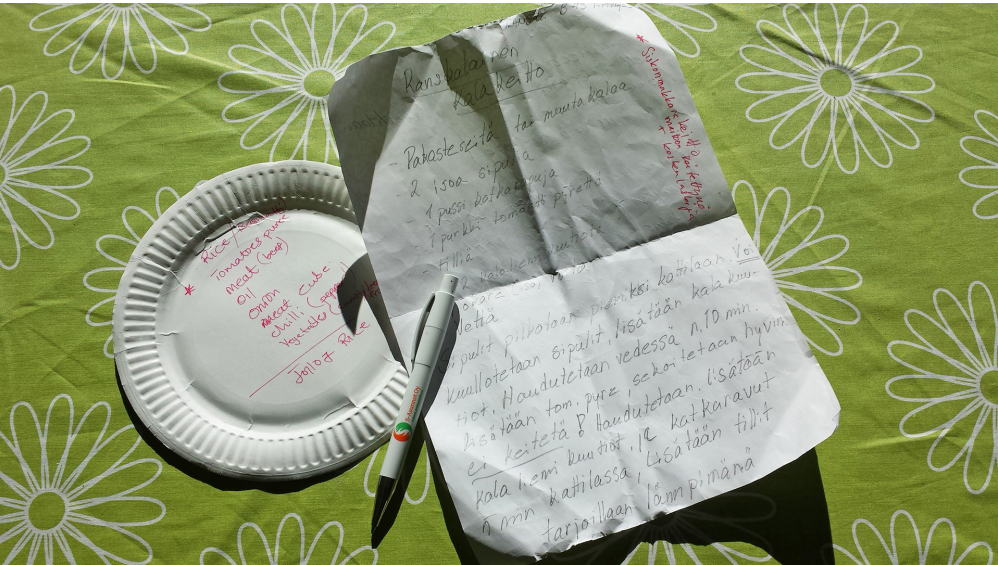


Fig. 46



Fig. 47



Fig. 48

pre-workshop coincided with their bbq party in the garden. The participants clearly were more interested in getting to the kitchen to cook and have fun than to discuss the memories beforehand. We picked up a few recipes and decided



Fig. 49

to do the shopping on the day of the workshop together, before cooking (Fig. 47). Again we had people from under 1 to 90 years old. The atmosphere of the workshop was very positive and friendly.

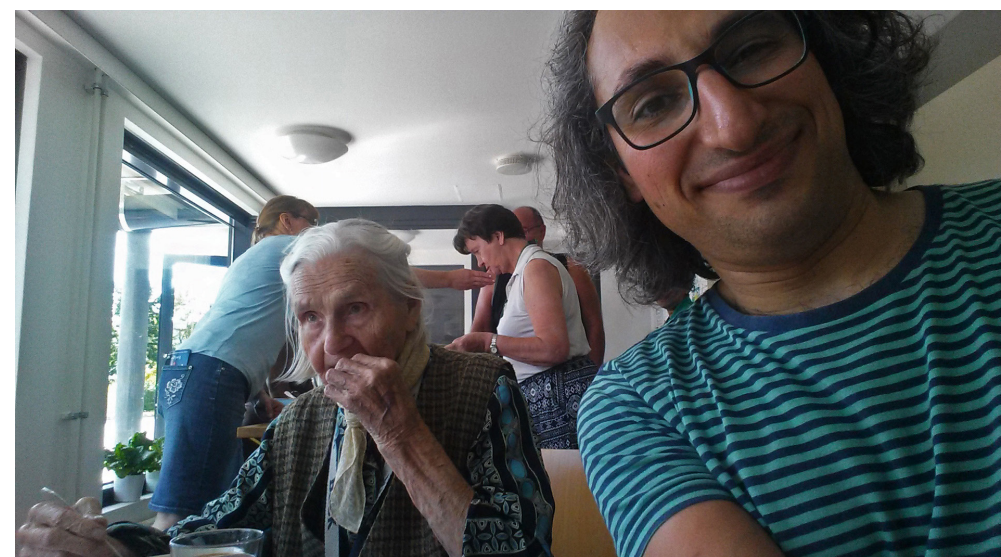


Fig. 50



Fig. 51

I got very positive feedback from the participants and staff of Settlementiasunnot for the three workshops. They suggested continuing the workshops in their buildings in other neighbourhoods and regions. However, I came to the conclusion that three workshops were enough, since I was done with my observation although we could create more pleasant time for their community.



Fig. 52



Fig. 53

Takeaways from the Workshops

- As a communication medium, food has, indeed, the potential to be used to create peace, tolerance and mutual understanding. The strong social aspect of food is undeniable. Cooking together is equally important as eating and sharing food together.
- People's relation with food was deeply emotional and visceral. It was difficult for them to explain why a particular food was their beloved one unless there was a pleasant memory associated with it. As Camp mentioned, ordinary people might not write books about food but they participate actively in the culinary culture on a daily base (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).
- Cooking is very similar to designing in that sense that Binder describes the design process as bringing to existence a non-existent phenomenon through material transformation and communicational procedures (Binder, Thomas, et al., 2011).
- A kitchen is a magical space; a kind of playground for creativity. Kitchen functions very similar to a design studio. Both are full of artifacts, raw materials and utensils, which are used for brainstorming, prototyping and

crafting. As Binder argues, design is navigation in the design environment (ibid.).

- People open up their heart and mind by sharing and eating each others' dearest food and feel more connected to each other. They participate in each other's memories (Shields-Argeles, 2018).
- As Csikszentmihalyi pointed out, the reason that people find artifacts (in this case recipes) dear for themselves, is because of the memories associated with them not the physical quality of those objects (Norman, 2005).

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KEENLY CULTURAL
THAN ANYTHING IN
PRINT.”

Camp

(Camp, quoted in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993)

Culinary Storytelling

Persikka (Culinary Storytelling)

Persikka is a culinary storytelling platform. It is a channel to tell my own and my fellow Iranians' stories. Story of a misunderstood nation. In Persikka I employ food as a tool to build bridges between people through culinary experiences. As I mentioned before, we share our culture and heritage via food. Every dish we eat has a story and a memory behind it. Geography, climate, beliefs, famines, abundances, birthdays, baptisms, weddings and funerals are

all embedded in the food we eat. Every dish is a chapter of a novel. I used sophisticated culinary techniques and outstanding design skills to modernise Iranian dishes by deconstructing the traditional dishes and reshaping them into astonishing, playful, surprising dishes, which would relate to non-Iranian audiences. In Persikka I try to translate Iranian dishes to the international culinary language. Here is an introduction to Persikka:



Fig. 54 Persikka's logo is inspired by paisley pattern, which has deep roots in the Iranian culture.

Persikka is a culinary journey to the most heard but the least visited country in the world, Iran, created by food designer, Vahid Mortezaei. It is the outcome of his own identity crisis. It is seeking a proper answer to the irritating question of “where are you from?”. Persikka is a possibility for him to keep his head up despite all odds while telling the world his own story. For him, food is the best manifestation of himself and his beloved motherlands’ culture.

Iran is home to one of the world’s oldest continuous major civilizations, with historical and urban settlements dating back to 7000 BC. Geopolitical location of Iran shaped its culture. The country has been in the middle of the old world, connecting four corners of the world to each other. Iranian/Persian cuisine is a living record of this complicated history. The cuisine is an outcome of the thousands of years of cultural exchanges among the people who lived in that territory, passed by, conquered it or got conquered by.

Despite all the glorious background, nowadays being an Iranian is an undeniable stigma. International and national political propagandas created a totally distorted image of Iran and Iranians. They call it the axis of evil. 80 million population of the country continuously are labelled as terrorists. As the Iranian Oscar awarded filmmaker Asghar Farhadi puts it, in the past decades this rich and ancient culture has been hidden under the heavy dust of politics.

The term, persikka itself is a culinary novel: peach got its Finnish name -persikka- from the Persians, who brought the fruit to Europe [until 1935 Iran used to be called “Persia” and the inhabitants, Persian]. The name Persikka symbolises the historical links between two continents who for the past decades have shared a complex relationship.

Until now I have carried out three individual projects within the concept of Persikka:

- 1,648,195 km²
- The Seven S’s
- Michelin & Me

1,648,195 km²

3-4.11.2018 | The concept of fine dining in Iranian cuisine does not exist. The Iranian chefs around the world try to bring Iranian dishes to the international scene but still there is a long way to achieve such a goal. That is why I had to start from scratch. I employed Ferran’s narrative of deconstruction since my non-Iranian audience did not have any memories related to the tastes and ingredients of my beloved Iranian dishes. I deconstructed traditional dishes and drinks and

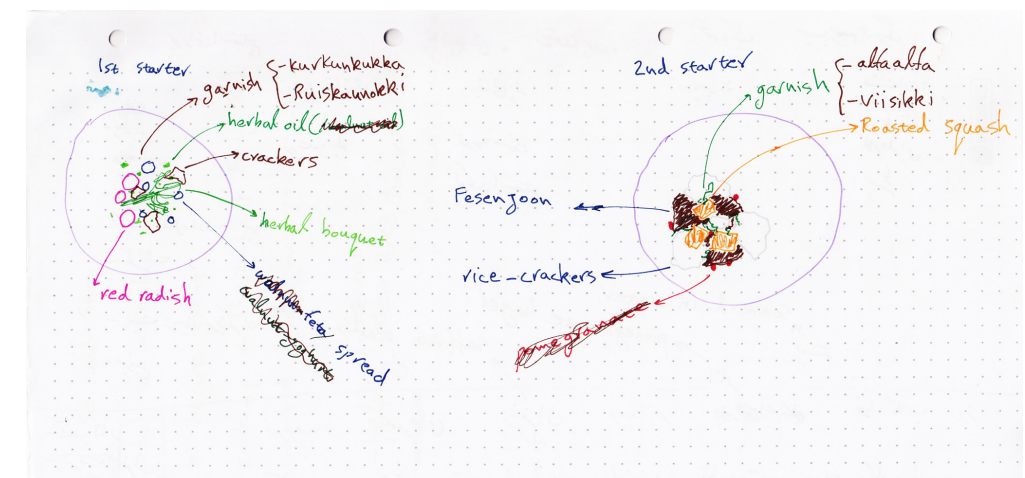


Fig. 55 Sketches of the dishes (1st & 2nd starter)

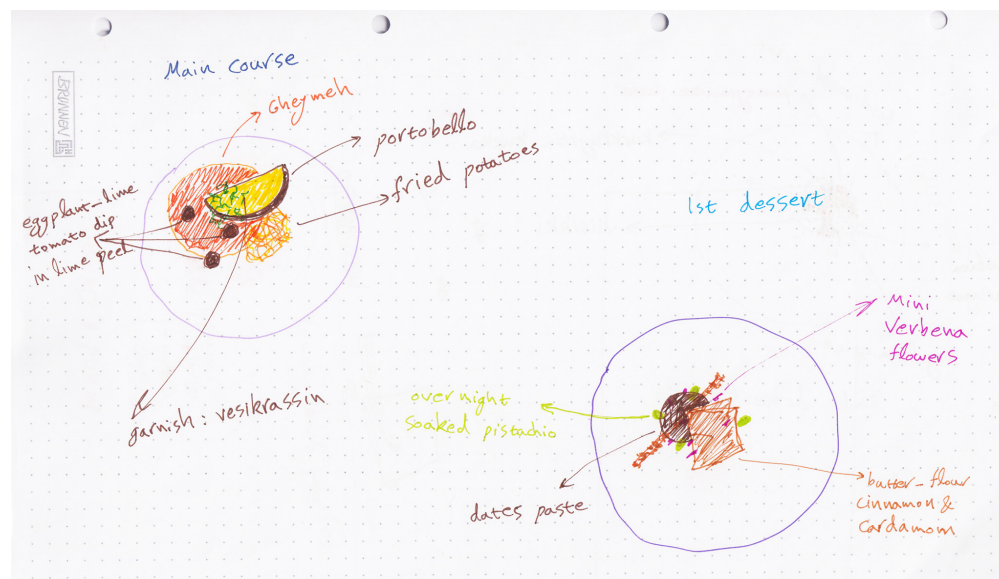


Fig. 56 Sketches of the dishes (main course & 1st dessert)

arranged them into a five-course tasting menu with its own drinks (the dining would last 2 hours). I transformed the traditional Iranian dishes in a way that the diners would relate themselves with the appearance of the dishes in a visceral level. They had never seen such a dish before but they found them attractive and

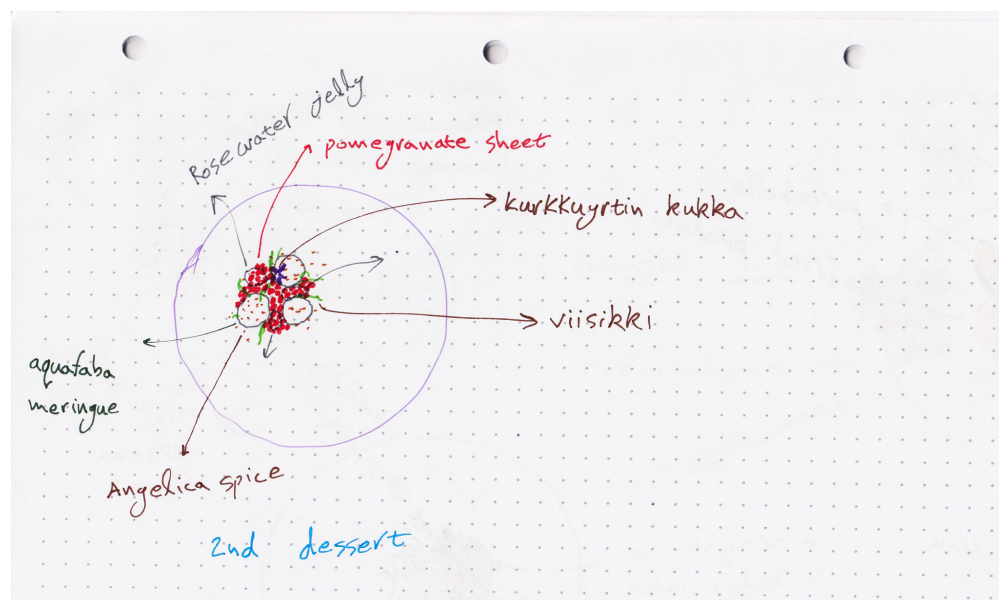


Fig. 57 Sketch of the 2nd dessert

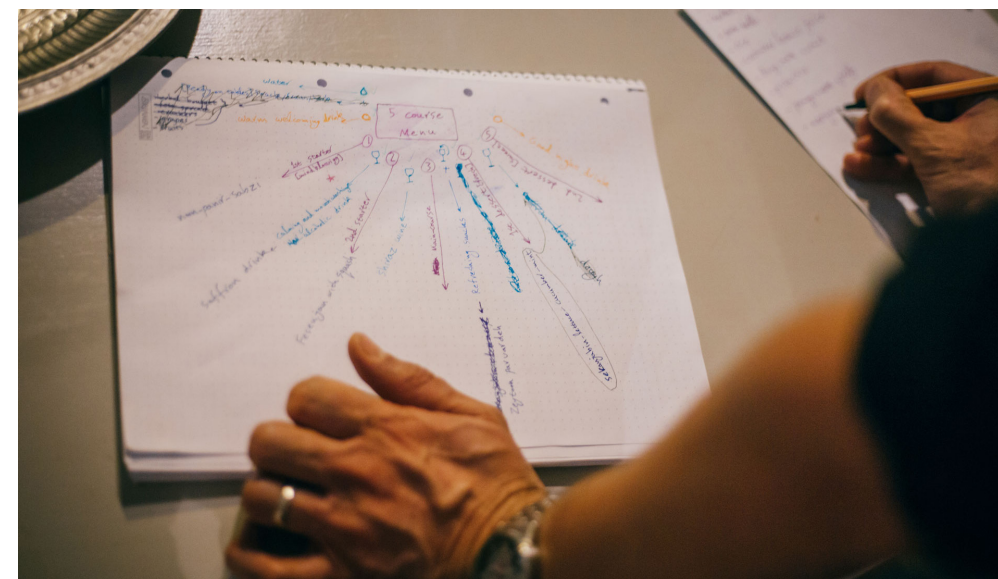


Fig. 58 Serving plan of the dinner
© Alexander Popkov

inviting to try. On the other hand, I tried to introduce an authentic collection of Iranian flavors. Paria Eskandari, a Finnish-Iranian guest (the only Iranian one), commented that although the dishes looked new but the tastes were what she had in her memory.



Fig. 59 Welcoming the guests
© Alexander Popkov

Måndag is a creative agency/coworking space, which gave us the opportunity to turn their office to a restaurant for two nights.

Over two nights of dinner in Måndag, I took my guests dish after dish across the 1,648,195 km² of Iran. The five-course meal was a combination of vegetarian and vegan dishes (and drinks), all inspired by the traditional dishes from different regions of Iran. We made the menu in format of a short story instead of the list of the dishes with their ingredients to emphasise the sense of traveling in a geographical location

A Warm Welcoming. In Iran we welcome people to our homes with black tea. So tonight's culinary journey also begins with tea. But I want to give you something different: Gol Gavzaban.

Enjoy your evening. You are most warmly welcome.

Noon Panir Sabzi. This is a snack that we always have at our tables in Iran, waiting for our guests when they arrive. While our guests are waiting for their food, they can snack on the tasty herbs.



Fig. 60 Plating Panir Sabzi
© Alexander Popkov



Fig. 61 Plating Fesenjan
© Alexander Popkov

Saffron Shot. Iran is the world's biggest producer of the world's most expensive spice, saffron. It mainly grows on the North-East of Iran. The smell of saffron takes me back to parties and gatherings with friends and family. So, I want to spread this smell to this dinner party too.

Before you sip, smell it. Where does it take you?

Fesenjan. Stews are the richest part of our cuisine. They are also different in each region -Iranians can tell whether a stew is northern or southern style. In this dish you will experience a perfect balance between sweet and sour -meykhosh, as we Iranians call it. For us, food is tasty when it has that balance -when it is meykhosh.

And I can tell you a secret. Meykhosh also literally means good wine in Persian!

Shiraz Wine. Buying, selling and producing alcohol has been totally forbidden in Iran since 1979. However, wine has a long history in the country. The archeologists have discovered one of the oldest wine remains in Iran. Shiraz wine got its name from Shiraz, a famous city in Iran, which is well-known because of its wine.

So, this is the only alcoholic drink that you will be served in this journey.

Even in Iran alcohol is available for those who really want it.

Geimeh. This dish can be found everywhere in Iran. It tastes different depending on where you eat it. All of our stews are eaten with a lot of rice. I have always been wondering why we eat more of that less tasty part of our dishes. So I wanted to change this balance for you. I hope you enjoy it!

Zeytoon Parvardeh. This is a very popular side dish from the north of Iran, where pomegranate is used a lot. With this dish I want to guide you towards the regional dimensions of my cuisine.

So, take a quick trip from the north to the south (in reality about 1200 km).



Fig. 62 Plating Pomegranate Blanket
© Alexander Popkov

Ranginak. Iran is one of the biggest producers of dates in the world. In southern Iran people use many kinds of dates, in many different ways. Iranian dates have even found their way to the Finnish supermarkets' shelves!

Actually, the positive comments about ranginak inspired me to go on



Fig. 63 Serving Sekanjabin
© Alexander Popkov

into this culinary career in Finland. Thanks to ranginak, I'm here.

Sekanjabin. This very popular drink is drunk especially during the summer time in Iran. People enjoy the syrup by dipping lettuce in it.

What would be a better time than November in Finland to feel the taste of summer!

Pomegranate Blanket. This dessert is a tribute to our national fruit, pomegranate, which symbolises life and love in our culture.

Whoever visits Iran is guaranteed to being overwhelmed by the hospitality and warmth of the Iranian people. I wish I transferred some of that feeling to you during this culinary journey.

Good Night Tea. In Iran people wait for the last cup of tea in the parties in order to say goodbye. They say that it's time for tea when they really want to say that they are tired and full and ready to go home.

Good night!



Fig. 64 Visiting the tables
© Alexander Popkov



Fig. 65 An Afghani guest was very satisfied with the dinner
(Afghani and Iranian Kitchens are close relatives)
© Alexander Popkov

The plating of dishes took place in the middle of the dining hall so participants could follow the process and enjoy the culinary performance (Fig. 62). I was frequently visiting the tables to have conversations with the guests and hear their opinions and answer the questions (Fig. 64 & 65).



Fig. 64 Happy faces are the most basic feedback in a restaurant
© Alexander Popkov

Takeaways from 1,648,195 km²

- The dialogue between chef and diners that Ferran Adria talked about was very present in the both nights. Food provoked reactions since the diners did not have any clue what kind of food they were going to have (Myhrvold et al., 2011).
- Some of the guests recognised familiar tastes and aftertastes. Similar to Marcel Proust, they were looking for the trace of those tastes in their own memories to connect with the story and my memories as the author (Proust, Scott-Moncrieff, Kilmartin and Enright, 1992). They were actively trying to participate in constructing the cross-cultural bridge.
- Food really functions as a communication medium. “Cooking is a language that can express harmony, creativity, happiness, beauty, poetry, complexity,

magic, humour, provocation and culture” (Adrià, Soler and Adrià, 2014, p. 87). As such, food can pass on important messages and even potentially break down negative stereotypes -in the middle of the dinner some of the guests were asking about flights to Iran and when is the best season to visit and which part of Iran is considered the most culinary region.

- Food can create feelings of being connected -both within the members of the audience and between myself as a chef and a food designer and my audience. An experience gets completed by sharing it clearly with others (Binder, et al., 2011).
- In contrast to the first case study, this time food was the center part of the event. Food was not anymore a passive excuse for gathering and socialising. Food created a field of common experience (like Wilbur Schramm's model), which kept connected people to each other through the whole performance.
- There are many similarities between fine dining and performance arts. Using the performative aspect of dining can create a very impactful experience for the diners. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett believes that “ food, like performance, is alive, fugitive, and sensory” (Shields-Argeles, et al., 2018, p.26). This aspect of food definitely requires further studies.



Fig. 66 Vahid with his team
© Alexander Popkov

“ COOKING IS A
LANGUAGE THAT
CAN EXPRESS
HARMONY,
CREATIVITY,
HAPPINESS, BEAUTY,
POETRY, COMPLEXITY,
MAGIC, HUMOUR,
PROVOCATION AND
CULTURE. ”

(Adrià, Soler and Adrià, 2014, p. 87)

The Seven S's

Finnish people consider mämmi something very unique but weird in their cuisine. Visually it also has the Iranian Fesenjan's problem, which I explained before. The very first time that a friend of mine wanted to introduce mämmi to me I could sense the hesitation in her words: "this is something that we have for Easter, it's a matter of love or hate"... I had a spoonful of it and found its taste, texture and look very familiar.

In the Iranian cuisine we have something very similar to mämmi, called sāmānu. We cook it only once a year for Nowruz celebration, which is the beginning of the Persian new year. Nowruz literally means new day and it starts around the 21st of March. When in Finland we see kevätpäiväntasaus (March equinox) written in the calendar, it's time for celebrating the Iranian New Year. Like the moment of kevätpäiväntasaus, the accurate time of Nowruz changes every year. When the moment arrives, the families gather around a table, which is decorated by seven items (called the seven s's because each element's Persian name starts with the letter "s") and wait until the accurate time of the change of the year –no matter what's their social status or religion. The seven items are:

- Sprouts / grass (sabzez)
- Garlic (sir)
- Vinegar (serkeh)
- Somatic (sumac)
- Apple (sib)
- Russian olives (senjed)
- Mämmi (samanu)



Fig. 67 Mämmi
© Vahid Mortezaei



Fig. 68 Seven S's at Lokal
© Vahid Mortezaei

Nowruz is an ancient celebration in Iran, which goes back to the Pre-Islamic Era. It is argued that perhaps these symbols -like some Easter traditions- come from the Ancient Persian religion, Zoroastrianism. All the Iranians, muslims or non-muslims, celebrate new year gathered around mämmi, grass and painted eggs. In other words, the Iranians and Finns cook a very similar dish once a year around a very similar date -despite the fact that the two countries are geographically



Fig. 69 Seven S's
© Katja Hagelstam

4000 km apart from each other and culturally a light-year away from each other. These similarities between two nations, which are geographically and culturally far from each other inspired me to use them for creating more friendship and mutual understanding between Finns and a couple of thousands Iranians who call Finland home.



Fig. 70 Seven S's
© Katja Hagelstam

Lokal is a concept store and gallery in the heart of Helsinki, run by photographer Katja Hagelstam. The Seven S's was created in the Spring 2019 when Lokal was celebrating its seventh birthday. We put the 7 years old birthday of Lokal, Easter and Nowruz altogether on 5th April 2019. To show the similarities between Easter and Nowruz traditions, I decided to combine 7 elements of HaftSin and make breakfast out of them. Even though all of the seven s's are edible, in Iran we do not usually eat them -we merely set them on a table as decoration.

The breakfast menu inspired by HaftSin was:

- Turkish yoghurt panna cotta with **Russian** olives slices and balsamic **vinegar** pearls
- Alfalfa **sprouts**, avocado cream, black **garlic** marinated with **sumac** on charcoal bread and boiled quails' eggs.
- **Apple** roses with **sämänu** on spinach biscuits
- Saffron drink



Fig. 71 Apple-rose with mämmi underneath
© Katja Hagelstam



Fig. 72 Egg-tapping
© Katja Hagelstam

Takeaways from the Seven S's

- The performance again showed that food is a very powerful communication medium and can create a great sense of community when designed carefully. In Iran we also paint eggs for the new year, which is another similar tradition to Finnish Easter. In the breakfast, one of the guests, Renata Jakowleff who has her origins in Hungary, remembered the tradition of egg fighting (egg tapping) from her childhood, which we have in Iran too (Fig. 72). So all of a sudden all the guests around the table were tapping eggs. I believe that for building peace and friendship among people, you should discover the tiniest similarities between them, then foster that similarity to become a monumental tree; a tree which both sides emotionally feel attached to. We, people from different countries and cultural backgrounds actually have a lot in common. Something as simple as egg fighting tradition can bring us together, tie our childhood memories to each other and make us new friends.
- As Norman argues beautiful objects function better (2005). Apple is a perfectly designed aesthetic object. But slicing it in the shape of rose petals, blanching them in beetroot and apple juice, rolling them like a rose flower sitting on a spinach cookie provides a new point of view to an apple (and roses). The apply-rose not necessary is more beautiful than the apple but definitely is a different way of seeing an apple. The Seven S's was an attempt to see a set of old and overused artifacts/traditions and symbols from totally new perspective (Fig. 71).

Michelin & Me

For this project I decided to use food for storytelling in a totally new way: a collection of 10 photos with a short story in 4 languages, which would be published online. The core of the project is nostalgia and memories of childhood and their relation to my culinary career.

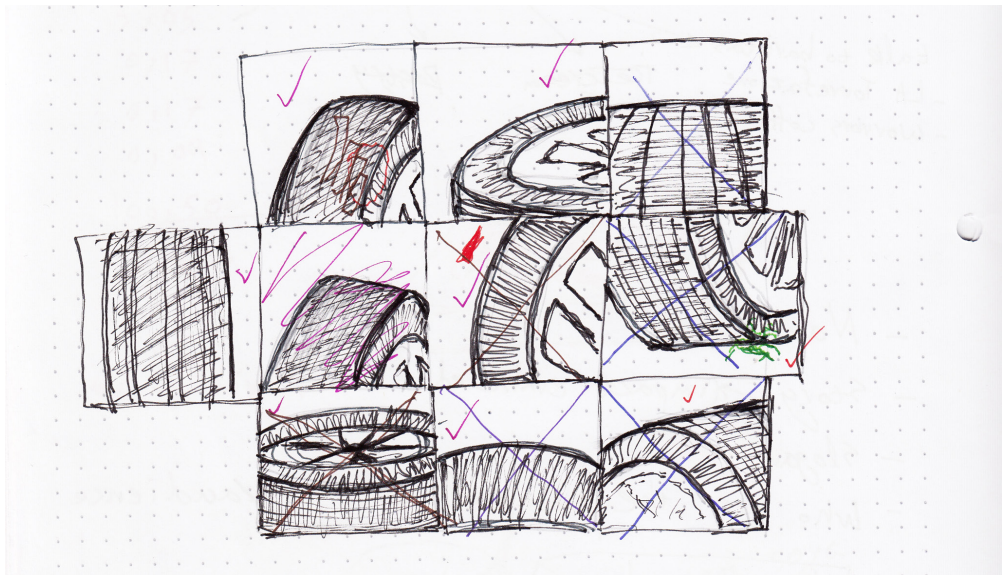


Fig. 73 & 74 Sketches for Michelin & Me



This project would not be what it is without help of my team and few others Petri Juola (car lover photographer), Juliette Frank de Cuzey (the social media guru of our team, who is also a foodie and French by nationality so she took care of French translation too), Sari P  ry (She helped us to get few brand new Michelin tires from Suomen Euromaster), Milla M  kinen (By introducing Sari P  ry to me and editing the English version of story (and more)) and Nasrin Andalibi (My mum, who had to go through the family albums to find few publishable photos of my childhood).

Fig. 75 Rehearsal in the kitchen
   Vahid Mortezaei





Fig. 76 With Petri Juola in the photo studio
© Vahid Mortezaei

Here is the story of the project:

Michelin & Me is all about food, beauty and contradictions. I tend to spend hours and hours admiring the beauty of natural ingredients and wondering how I could make them even more beautiful. Once we get used to beauty, we simply do not perceive it anymore. As a food designer I try to discover unfamiliar angles to nature.

Herbs and flowers are very delicate and perishable. The freshness of vegetables is measured by their firmness, fragility and crispiness. Exploring the contrast between the colorful, fresh, natural ingredients against a black, artificial, industrial object -like a car tire- is the main aspect of the project. This contradiction is also part of one of the world's largest tire manufacturing company's -Michelin's- brand. The same company is also highly influential in global haute cuisine. This story is at least as interesting as the story of tires themselves.



Fig. 77 Daikon Lasagne
© Petri Juola & Vahid Mortezaei

The invention of the wheel is, in fact, one of the turning points in our civilization. The discovery of pneumatic tires a lot later was a paradigm shift for the transportation industry. Tires are amazing. They are carefully fabricated to be tough and durable but at the same time they should be soft and elastic. They are also associated with movement and progression. Having them static in still life photos create a delicate suspension.



Fig. 78 Alfalfa Nest
© Petri Juola & Vahid Mortezaei

The monochromatic tires also have their own aesthetic value. They are uniform sculptures that in the first glance look like boring donuts. But a closer look at their surface reveals a beautiful play of light and shadow.

In the end tires are not that far from nature either, even though we tend to set them against it. In reality, nature has been the main source of inspiration for many technological innovations.

In order to frame the project, I wrote a story of me and Michelin:

A few days ago I bought a new set of tires for our family car. When I was carrying them in the trunk, the car was filled with the smell of new tires. All of a sudden this aroma took me back to my childhood, to my grandparents' beautiful garden in Iran. The garden was full of different kind of flowers including a variety of colorful roses, a couple



Fig. 79 Purple Radish Ball
© Petri Juola & Vahid Mortezaei

of fruit trees with and there was a huge walnut tree in the middle. In front of the balcony with pickled tomatoes jars behind the windows, there was also a shallow pool.

The house itself was huge. It was like a residential complex. I think they had bought three to four houses next to each other and gradually attached them together, because the house had several entrances from different streets. It had four kitchens, many rooms, four toilets, storages, my grandma's tailoring workshop, a scary cellar, etc. There was a big yard too where they kept many kinds of poultries. Spending time in that house and getting pampered by grandparents was the best possible holiday for us, the grandchildren. It was the best playground on earth, with the best places for hide and seek. You could hide in the morning and get found in the evening.

The garden was surrounded by different kinds of brand new tires. The garage, some of the storages and maybe even part

of the cellar were full of black tires and other rubbery stuff related to tires. The smell of roses was mixed to that of the tires. Either I was very small or back then truck tires were very big. A pile made of a few tires laying on top of each other was like a deep well to hide in. While I was hiding inside that rubbery well, I had a chance and the time to study the tires closer, smell them and feel their texture. I was mainly fascinated with their patterns. From the inside they looked really interesting, like weaved thick black fabrics. If you were wearing brightly colored clothes, when you left the rubbery shelter, they were all nearly black.

My uncle Alireza owns a tire shop. In fact, many of my mom's relatives are in the tire business (or other car related businesses). When I was a kid, Alireza was single and lived



Fig. 80 Romanesco Carpet
© Petri Juola & Vahid Mortezaei



Fig. 81 Bridal Rhubarb
© Petri Juola & Vahid Mortezaei

with his parents (later on, when he got married, they gave him part of the house so he actually continued living there with his family). He was new in the tire business and had a small shop with no storage. That's why the house was full of tires.

Alireza was young, kind and fun. Spending time with him meant eating yummy stuff, possibly getting toys and lots of attention. Actually he was really into toys himself -specially model cars. Such a kind uncle was excellent company for playing too. I would try to charm him in very sneaky ways in order to get a part of his toy collection. He had lots of car magazines and car games. My passion for cars obvious comes from him.

Since the age of seven, every summer I would "work" a few days in his shop. Imagine a tiny boy trying to carry tires or mop the shop floor. Obviously I could not really do any of

the jobs but I would get tips from the customers because of my effort. For the first time I met the Michelin Man in the shop. Bibendum was everywhere: on the wall, in the ashtray, on the roof top of the trucks. I never really understood what was the relation of this weird guy with the whole tire industry.

Later, when I was a young adult, Alireza became an authorized Michelin dealer. That was the time when Michelin became an important topic in our conversations. You should see how passionately him and his sons spoke about Michelin tires at our shared dinner table.

I have always been a foodie but frankly I did not have any clue why some restaurants are called Michelin-starred until I got into the culinary world. With a strong background in design I knew very well what kind of food I want to cook; food is my storytelling media. An internship in Olo, the Michelin-starred restaurant in Helsinki was the moment that for the first time I experienced the Michelin madness. An army of extremely dedicated, competitive and perfectionist people (with tattoos) were treating a carrot like a piece of gold. Soon my forearms were burning proudly with boiling oil drops while I was making charred onion petals.

Nowadays every single day I hear about Michelin but still for me Michelin is the smell of roses, new tires and wet earth while Hababa (my lovely grandpa) was watering the garden.

Takeaways from Michelin & Me

- Food on online platforms creates different kinds of reactions since it functions differently. Social media literally extends the influence of food. The audience have no chance to taste, smell or touch what they observe. Such limitations would engage them on a reflective level. As Apicius believed, they would first start to eat by their eyes (Chen, Woods and Spence, 2018) but

the rest of the experience would leave to their imaginations.

- This project was a formalistic approach to food, which should be studied in the still-life genre. That is why it turned to a contravisory project that divided the audiences. Audiences with art and design backgrounds found it very impactful while some cooks and food lovers found it disrespectful to food.
- Nobody tried those foods on tires but surprisingly many still remember the project as a successful one. Such an emotional impact of the project could categorise it as a visceral design (Norman, 2005).



Fig. 82 Romanesco Carpet II
© Petri Juola & Vahid Mortezaei

10

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

In this chapter the outcome of the thesis work will be summarized. The takeaways of each case study and literature reviews already were mentioned in the previous chapters. Here the contribution of this thesis as a whole will be reviewed. The encountered limitations will be discussed in the second section. At the end the future approaches to continue this work will be mentioned.

Contribution

Food is a social communication medium, with which you have to be “online” all the time. There is no chance to “sign out from the food web”. The existential and influential role of food in mankind’s life is irreplaceable. With or without food designers, it will keep shaping humans’ life and their surroundings. “What matters is that ordinary people understand and employ the symbolic and cultural dimensions of food in their everyday affairs....Ordinary people may not write books about how food means, but they participate in an ongoing—in fact, daily—discourse on the subject more keenly cultural than anything in print” (Camp, quoted in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). This quote explains nicely the beginning point of the thesis work back to 2014. The series of workshops, which were carried out in collaboration with Suomen Setlementtiliitto, were based on the belief on the social power of

food in bringing people together to create more tolerance and cohesion (chapter 9). In 2020, that initiative looks very limited and amateur. Food is a lot more than just an excuse for socialising.

If human beings were still hunter-gatherers in the 21st century, that level of knowledge about food would be more than enough. But that is not the case. Human beings, with their lifestyle, have brought the whole planet to its edge and, in this crime against humanity, their diet is one of the prime suspects. As it was discussed in the 6th chapter, we actively shape our food and environment and, in return, they shape us (catastrophically). Food has the capability to change its surroundings and in a big picture, that change is the message, which food communicates. But at a micro-level, food goes even beyond that. Food is a powerful multisensory communication

channel, whose characteristics are still undiscovered.

This thesis is a beginning for further studies on food as a communication medium. It is an attempt to construct a foundation for the future studies and to build a framework for them. It took nearly six years to finalise the thesis and one of the main reasons

was the lack of such a framework and map of the road in the first point. Food as a communication medium deserves to be researched further by independent research groups such as the Crossmodal Research Laboratory of Oxford University, headed by Professor Charles Spence, whose findings have been referred to several times in the previous pages.

Limitation

As it has been mentioned above, lack of knowledge, skills and framework were the main challenges at the beginning of this thesis study. A comparison between the first case studies and the most recent ones clearly illustrates the development of the designer from a sincere passionate foodie to a knowledgeable food designer. Underestimating the level of complexity of food was probably the main reason for such an amateur start. Several years of experience in the culinary field finally taught that preparing food is much more than boiling a few ingredients in a pot.

The participants of the workshops, which were organised in Setlementtiasunnot’s locations, truly enjoyed sharing their stories and recipes, cooking and eating together and having a good time. As mentioned, the organisation

was happy with the outcome of the sessions too and they were willing to continue with them. Despite all the positive feedback, with today’s insights, one question remains. What was the role of the food designer in those workshops and where was food design? Those workshops would definitely look totally different today.

The topic of the thesis is truly multidisciplinary and complicated. There are not enough relevant sources or previous studies to use as references. It would be more fruitful if the thesis would be done as a multidisciplinary research project, in collaboration with experts from other fields, from the very early stages, in order to prevent any shallow conclusions because of possible lack of knowledge. For future studies such a cooperation is strongly recommended.

Future Approaches

Food is a communication medium. This study is a proof for such an argument. Until now, food has been a mumbling communication medium. We comprehend food not because we recognize its words and sentences, but because we know food's gestures and impressions very well, since we have been so close to each other for such a long time. But, for knowing this powerful communication medium and in order to use it actively and accurately we need further multidisciplinary research led by food designers, who can decode this ancient language. The Persikka project (chapter 9) showed that carefully designed food can communicate the most complicated meanings in a very impactful way, but for carefully designing food you have to know all the communicational components of the medium very well.

Modernist chefs such as Ferran Adrià have pushed the boundaries of the culinary world and invited designers

and scientists to join the movement. Adrià has clearly been interested in food as a communication medium by having dining as a dialogue (chapter 8) in his perspective. Nevertheless, the communicational aspect of food is still an overlooked topic, especially from the eyes of communication scholars. As mentioned in the 5th chapter, researchers from the other human science fields have emphasized the importance of this topic and call their colleagues to carry out further studies on. The difficulty of finding relevant sources for preparing the thesis showed that the call is still waiting for a proper response. Despite the expertise of designers (particularly the visual communication designers) there has not been any accessible research on this topic. This study could be considered as a useful framework for those necessary future studies. This end of this thesis is, indeed, just a beginning.

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12

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ethnocentric Trap: Believing that your own race, nationality, etc are better than others

Gustatory Receptors: Sensors in oral cavity, which are responsible for recognising different tastes

Kinaesthetic Effect: (In the culinary world) The tactile feeling of food in mouth

Modernist Cuisine: “Modernist Cuisine is an interdisciplinary team in Bellevue, Washington, founded and led by Nathan Myhrvold. The group includes scientists, research and development chefs, and a full editorial department—all dedicated to advancing the state of culinary art through the creative application of scientific knowledge and experimental techniques” (www.modernistcuisine.com). The term is used to refer to a particular kind of modern cuisine too.

Neurogastronomy: Neurogastronomy studies the concept of flavor and its cognitive and memorial influences on human’s mind. It is an interdisciplinary field of psychology and neuroscience. There is a book with the same title by Gordon M. Shepherd (published by Columbia University Press, 2011).

Olfactory Epithelium: The name of a tissue on the roof of nasal cavity, which is responsible to recognise smell

Oral Mucosa: The lining membrane inside the mouth

Plating: Arranging food on a plate

Trigeminal Sensations: The sensations beyond five basic tastes which create flavor. Spiciness or electric sensations are among those ones.



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